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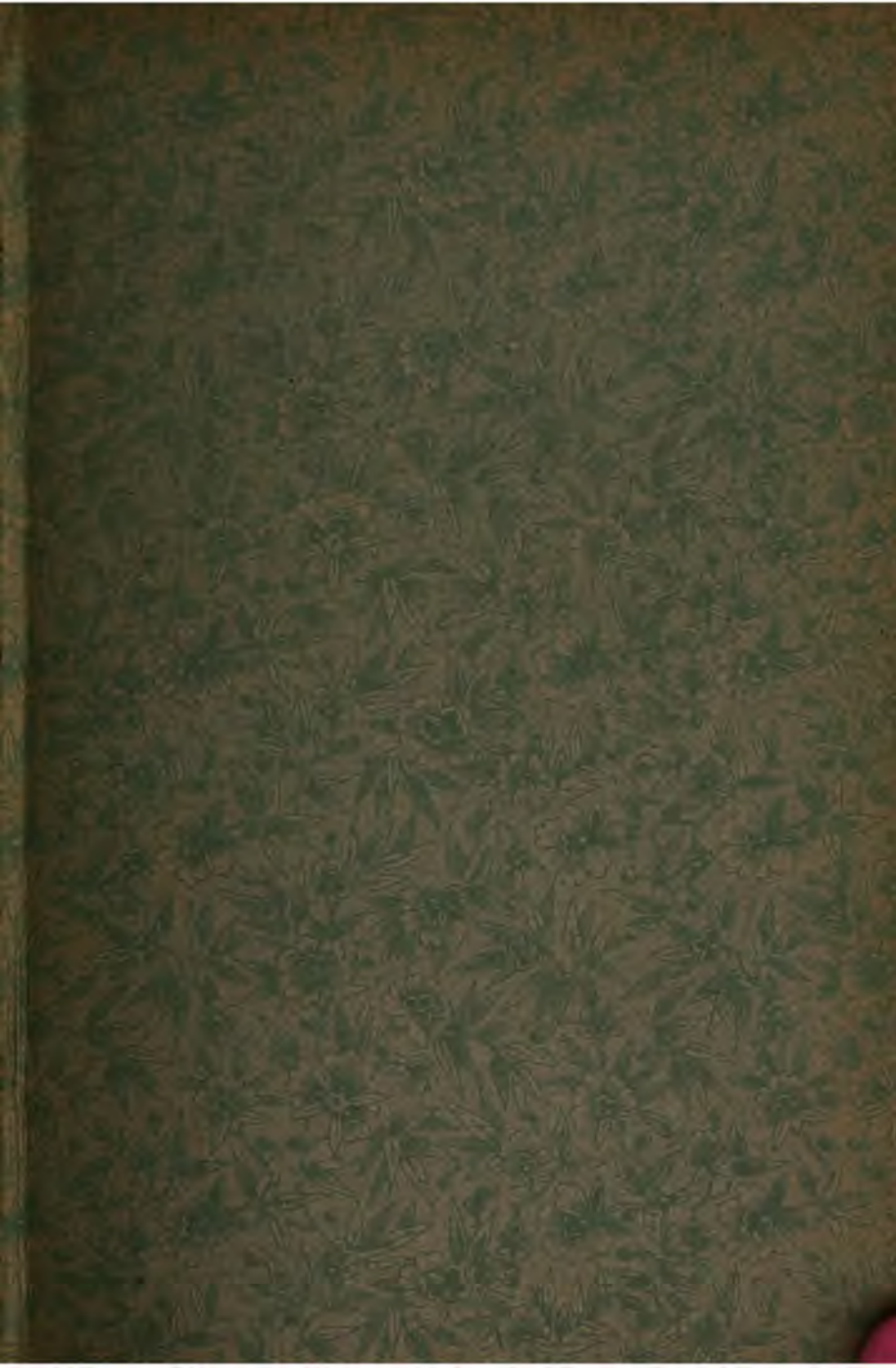
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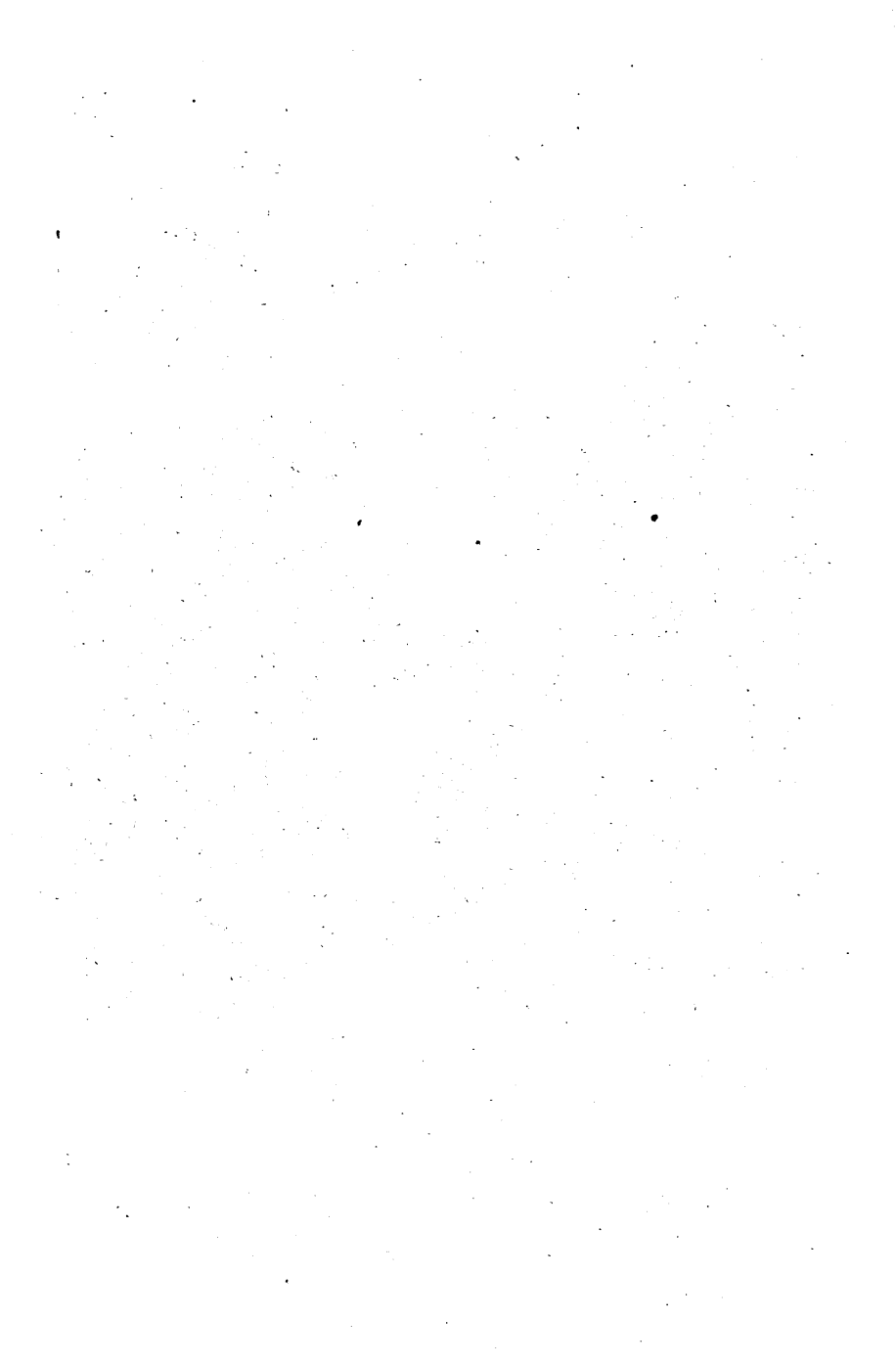
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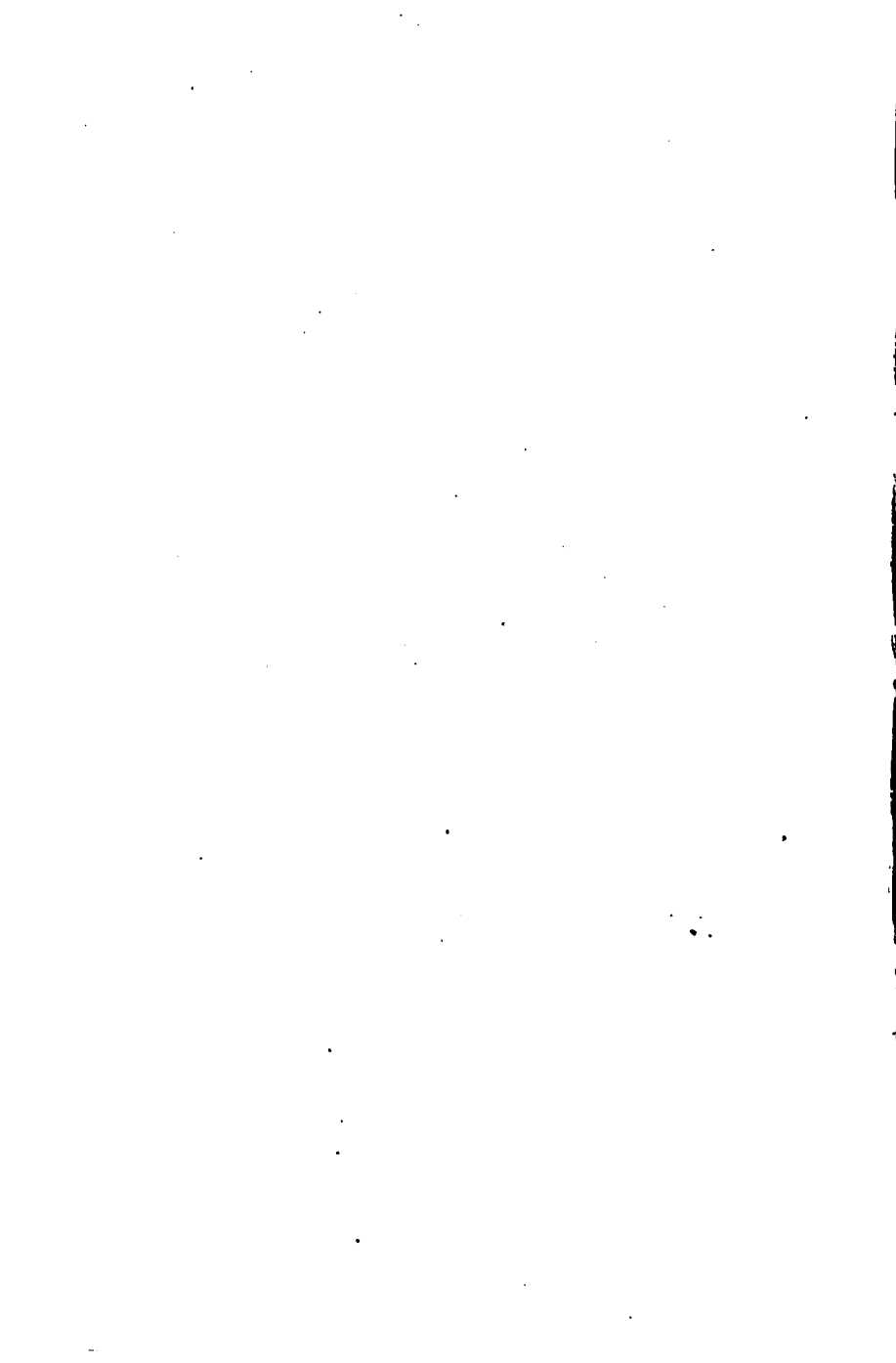
JOHN BICKERDYKE M.A.







WITH THE BEST INTENTIONS.



WITH THE BEST INTENTIONS

A Tale of
Undergraduate Life at Cambridge

BY
JOHN BICKERDYKE, M.A.

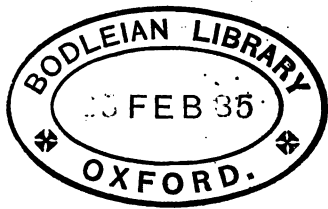
“—being ignorant of scientific subjects, he feels a difficulty in appearing to pronounce any judgment on what was certainly a very interesting and perfectly genuine exhibition.”

Extract from a letter of Mr. GLADSTONE to Mr. STUART CUMBERLAND.

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PREFACE,

Which the Author respectfully requests may be read.



LIFE at the Universities has so changed since "Mr. Golightly" and "Verdant Green" were written, that an apology for this book is, I think, hardly necessary. In it I have endeavoured to make as lifelike a picture as possible, of certain phases of modern undergraduate life; and, at the same time, create a plot of so unusual a description, that it will, I hope, interest and amuse the reader from page 1 to *Finis*.

Whether Cambridge men will be proud or

not to learn that their University is the place where the first public exposition of Thought-reading was given, I cannot say ; but I see no reason why it should not be made known.

To prevent any cap-fitting heart-burnings, I take this opportunity of saying that Mr. Flack, though drawn from life, is not taken from any one particular person. As a matter of fact, he who possessed the physical attributes of Mr. F. was a very worthy old fellow. Nor should this gyp be taken as a type, but rather as a bad specimen. Nevertheless, I heartily commend to the consideration of the University authorities the remarks made by the actor on page 137. Perquisites are not the least of the many means by which the unfortunate undergraduate is unavoidably (so far as he is concerned) fleeced. Strange to say, he suffers worst of all at the hands of the dons, who, at the end of each term, send him in a college bill amounting

rarely to less than £50, and embracing such extraordinary items as *quarterage* and *detriments*. The reason for these extravagant bills never occurred to me, till one morning I saw the head-cook of a certain college, drive up to the kitchens in his brougham.

The cost of education at Cambridge is a scandal. Between two and three hundred a year is the least a man can live on up there at all comfortably, and that does not include the expenses of the vacations. Some men of course do manage with a little less, but the worry consequent on their having great difficulty in making both ends meet has a very detrimental effect on their reading and place in the degree list. It is quite time that a sweeping reform was made in college domestic economy—or rather extravagance.

“ But what has this to do with your story ? ”
you may ask.

I answer frankly, "Little or nothing."

However, I can honestly say that the foregoing has been written—to use the manager's words in his letter to the dons—*with the best intentions.*

JOHN BICKERDYKE.





LIFE IN CAMBRIDGE.

CHAPTER I.

WHICH TREATS, AMONG OTHER THINGS, OF A
FIRST-RATE METHOD OF PREVENTING WASTE.

“WELL, I suppose I can't do better than tell Rivingston about it. He's been in so many scrapes that he can, perhaps, advise me how to get out of this one,” said to himself, Johnny Jordan, undergraduate of Trinity College, Cambridge, owner of comfortable rooms in the front court—Mr. Abbot's side—and, at that time, in his second year of residence.

“DEAR RIVINGSTON,—I want to have a chat

with you after hall. Come round if you possibly can about eight o'clock.

“ Yours,

“ J. J.”

“ Don't bring any men with you.”

Having written this note, Johnny went on to his staircase and shouted, “ Flack ! Flack ! ”

“ Yes, sir,” came a faint voice from the depths below, and presently a very stout, ruddy-nosed man made his appearance.

Jordan's gyp was “ a character ” in *his* way.

To begin with, there was a mystery concerning him. In his youth, it is said, he was a jockey, and rode horses. Not that jockeys usually ride anything else, only this man being, at the time this history commences, of great bulk, people were apt to add, “ and he rode horses,” to the statement that he was a jockey, to indicate that his former racers were not elephants as might otherwise have been imagined.

Flack's equestrian performances began at Newmarket and ended in India. Coming home from abroad he married a blooming assistant bedmaker, on whom he lived for some time. He then unaccountably disappeared, and for ten years nothing was known of him. One day, to every one's amazement, he returned, grown to an immense size—a certain sign, his friends said, that he had not been in prison—and took a situation as gyp in Trinity. Both he and his wife were a singularly uncommunicative pair—especially singular in the woman—and it was a common thing for bets to be made that ten consecutive words could not be dragged out of either of them. Flack weighed about fifteen stone, and was honest as all gyps are. That he was hardworked goes without saying.

“Are you waiting at second hall to-night, Flack?” asked Johnny.

“ Yes, sir,” replied the gyp.

“ Then I want you to give this note to Mr. Rivingston. I am going to Downing, and shall pass by Doo’s ; is there anything wanted there? ”

The gyp reflected a moment.

“ Candles, tea, sugar, and *squish*.”¹

“ Very well, I’ll order them in,” saying which Jordan put his cap on his head, threw his gown over his arm, and sallied forth.

Flack also disappeared, but soon returned with his wife, who was now bedmaker on that staircase.

Johnny we need not follow. Light-hearted as a lark, he cast all his troubles to the winds. That he was deep in debt from that last day at Newmarket, it was not easy to forget ; but, once having made up his mind to consult his friend Rivingston about it, he looked upon the

¹ *I.e.*, Marmalade.

whole thing as settled—at any rate for the present.

With a cheerful smile he told Mrs. Doo of his wants, and strode along the King's Parade, bound for Downing College.

It may be amusing, if not instructive, to notice the little scene which took place in Jordan's rooms during his absence.

"Jordan's gone to Doo's," said Flack.

"What for?" asked his better half.

"Candles, tea, sugar, and *squish*."

Without more talking a basket was produced, and into it went the contents of the tea canister, sugar basin, and also two candles. Mrs. Flack vanished. Mr. Flack remained to tidy up the room.

It has been said that great thinkers talk little. Possibly Flack was a great thinker; at any rate, as he moved about the room, he seemed to have something on his mind. By himself he

appeared more talkative than when in company, and a careful listener would have caught disjointed fragments as he muttered—

“Two candles—two candles the week—one hundred and four candles the year—eight to the pound. Umph! that’s—eights in ten once—in twenty four, three—thirteen; that’s thirteen pounds of candles a year. Well, that ain’t bad from one set of rooms, and there’s eight on ’em! That’s eight thirteens—a hundred and four pounds of candles a year!”

After this calculation he remained quiet for a while on the sofa, pondering, doubtless, on the hardships of a gyp’s life—a contented look on his face, nevertheless.

His repose was interrupted by his spouse, who came in to say that Jenkins was yelling, “Flack,” like mad.

“Let him yell,” said the gyp, whose face had an air of mysterious importance, as he added—

“ I have worked it out.”

“ Worked what out ? ” asked his wife.

“ The candles.”

“ Whose candles ? ”

“ Why theirs—no, ours—of course ? ”

“ What do you make it come to ? ”

“ Two candles a week, and eight sets of rooms.” This being a long sentence for the silent one, he paused.

“ Well ? ” said the bedmaker, inquiringly.

“ A hundred and four pounds a year ! ”

Now as it was the woman who always made the usual half-yearly sale of the perquisites, she knew at once that there was an error in her husband's arithmetic. To this, however, the gyp would not assent. Taking writing materials from Jordan's desk, he again made the calculation.

“ There ! ” he said, triumphantly. “ It's all right.”

But as he spoke, a light broke in upon his wife.

“Why, you old fool, you hav’n’t thought of the vacations. It’s only half,” she shrieked at him.

The gyp was evidently annoyed at so much brain-work being expended to so little purpose, and possibly, also, that his wife should find him mistaken ; but he was not yet at a loss for an idea.

“See here now,” he said.

“Well ?” sneered the woman.

“We can make it right.”

“How ?”

“Take four candles a week from each of ’em.”

“In course we can ;” and the lady, with a brightened face, bustled off to attend to her duties.

The sagacious gyp, first looking to see if the

coast was clear, helped himself to a glass of sherry from a decanter which stood conveniently on the sideboard, smacked his lips, and hastened to attend on the dejected Jenkins.





CHAPTER II.

WHICH INTRODUCES IMPORTANT CHARACTERS, AND
TREATS OF A CONFESSION AND A CONSPIRACY.

ABOUT eight o'clock the same evening, the two friends were sitting in Jordan's rooms.

Rivingston was a fair, good-looking, broad-shouldered fellow, with a well-grown moustache, which made him appear a good deal older than he actually was. He possessed an open countenance which would have been frankness itself, were it not for a pair of the most mischievous and merry blue eyes possible. There was hardly a rule of the University which he had not broken, more for the fun of the thing, indeed, than anything else. A man with many

friends and no enemies. Generous to a fault ; full of fun and practical jokes ; but not one atom of vice in his composition. A rare character his. How few men now-a-days—or possibly in any days—are humorous, frolicsome, witty fellows, without being tainted with one or other of the fashionable vices ! Like famous Robin Hood, Jack Sheppard, and other worthies, Rivingston never played his practical jokes on helpless women or children, the homeless and fatherless, or even on sucking undergraduates, unless they made themselves particularly objectionable. His game, rather, was over-strict and offensive proctors, domineering bulldogs, thieving gyps, bedmakers, and—that there should be such things in one of the principal seats of English learning !—swindling tradesmen. Certain kinds of *smugs*, also, were his abomination. Not the out-at-the-elbows reading man, oftentimes called a *smug* for no

other reasons than his poverty ; but that peculiar species of *smug* which is ubiquitous—prigs. Rivingston was the leader of those men who, whilst receiving every kind of abuse and ill-treatment from dons, heads of colleges, and University authorities generally, are, in fact, the greatest friends the proctors have. Without them the cause for proctors would cease, and with the cause the post. He used often to complain at the bad return he received from these officials, who, he said, owed to him and certain kindred spirits their yearly income.

Jordan was, in some respects, the reverse of his friend, being of the middle height, slim, with dark eyes, and a face innocent of hair. A man whose appearance gave very little idea of his character. No one looking into the sedate face and dreamy eyes would read there his careless, mirth-loving, easy-going nature. His abilities were good, but his application

most uncertain. For weeks together he would work wondrously well ; then, a rest becoming necessary, a couple of days' holiday would give him such a taste for pleasure and dislike for work, that he might not open a book again for the rest of the term. Such a pupil plunged tutors in despair, after raising their hopes to the highest. Both Rivingston and Jordan were men of great abilities, the difference being that, whereas the former never did any work, the latter did some occasionally.

Jordan's rooms were, after the tutor's, perhaps the cosiest in Trinity. The two friends were buried—it cannot be said they were seated—in deep, low armchairs, in front of a blazing fire. Between them was a small table, on which stood coffee ; and in the fireplace lay a hot smoking dish of buttered toast. Ah ! those past, happy, strong-digested days of youth ! A luxurious-looking sofa filled up one side of the

room, and, facing it, was a grand piano ; at this time, the only one in the college. Jordan was a fair musician, and could play and sing pleasantly enough : accomplishments extremely useful at many a festive *drunk*. For the benefit of those who have never been *in statu pupillaris*, be it understood that *wines* (or wine parties) have gone out of fashion—in name at least ; *drunks* being the name by which *after-hall* convivialities are now usually known. The great difference is that, whereas at *wines* men often got drunk, at *drunks* an inebriate is never, or rarely, seen. Also, be it understood, that this is laid down as a general rule, only, to which there are certain special exceptions, such as *bump-suppers* after college boat-races ; and these are often, and properly, called *drunks*.

“Sport your oak, Johnny, if you don’t want any fellows to come in, and tell me what it’s all about,” said Rivingston, helping himself from

the dish in the fireplace. "You do the talking, and I'll do the listening—and eating."

"By Jove, Rivingston, it's horribly serious," replied Jordan, throwing himself back in his chair, after having shut the outer door of his room. These outside doors or *oaks*, shut with a latch on the inside, and any one entering requires a key to open them. "But, before I tell you anything about it, promise you won't want to lend me anything, for it's a money difficulty."

"My dear fellow, what a thing to ask! You know, as far as I am able, I shall help you out of a trouble of that kind," said the other, warmly.

"You would if I would let you; but I don't mean to," replied Jordan, eyeing his friend affectionately. "As a matter of fact, the sum I want is more than you could afford to lend; and even if it were smaller I would not borrow

it of you. I have always fancied that when a man has borrowed of another, they are never quite such good friends afterwards."

Rivingston sat for a few moments gazing into the fire, munching the buttered toast, and meditating as to the best way of getting over Jordan's scruples. Finally he said :

"I don't see why you should want me to make such a promise. I can't make you take the money against your will, even if I had it, which you say I have not ; so tell me, how did you get into this trouble, and what is it ?"

"I won't tell you one word more about it, unless you do as I want you."

Seeing that Jordan was firm, Rivingston gave the desired promise, thinking at the same time how few men would act as his friend was doing, and appreciating him all the more highly.

"Now, as that's settled, I'll begin," said Johnny, drawing close to the fire, and lighting

a cigar. "The whole trouble came out of my knowledge of mathematics. You know I went to Newmarket last Wednesday with Fitzgerald. Well, on the way we began talking of systems of betting, and I made up, as I thought, a perfect one. Awfully simple too! Back every first favourite, keep on doubling your stakes until you win, and then begin over again with the original amount."

"Yes, I've heard of that sort of thing before, but never knew any one gain by it," interrupted Rivingston.

"I daresay not," continued the other. "Well, Fitz and I were so struck with the idea that we determined to try it. We each began with a modest half-crown. On the first race we won; on the second race we ventured another half-crown, and this we won also; the third race was against us, and we lost steadily for the rest of the day. Of course the next day we had to

go to Newmarket to follow up the system, but, as luck would have it, hardly a favourite won a race, and in the afternoon we found we were three hundred pounds to the bad. I can assure you I had no idea one little half-crown would have mounted up so. Having lost so much we stopped betting, but I firmly believe the system would have worked out all right if we had only kept it up."

"No, you're wrong there," interrupted the other; "supposing the odds were even, and you were to lose, say, the first five races, and win on the sixth, you would only win once the original stakes. You can easily tot it up; I did so myself once, and saw it was not good enough. But go on—let's hear the worst."

"Oh, you've heard the worst; there is only this to add, that Fitzgerald has arranged the matter with Richardson the bookmaker for the present; but says we shall have to pay the

money before the end of the month. Fitz wants to go on betting——”

“Silly fool!” muttered Rivingston. “Not you, old boy,” he added, seeing a change in Jordan’s face; “I mean Fitzgerald. Why, the system’s rotten to the core.”

“I won’t trouble to argue that out; I’m not particularly keen on it. But what am I to do? If I go to my uncle for money, he will probably stop my allowance, and cut me out of his will—he has such a holy horror of gambling.”

“The only suggestion I can make on the spur of the moment is,” said Rivingston, “that you do like the poet in ‘Patience,’ put yourself up to be raffled for, and pay Richardson out of the proceeds. Nay, you needn’t smile, it’s quite feasible. Let your hair grow, write poetry, dress æsthetically, and go to Newnham and Girton, announcing boldly that by the advice of your solicitor, you are willing to put

yourself up to be raffled for ; there would be a splendid market for lottery tickets."

"Yes, and I might bolt, after the tickets were sold," replied Jordan.

"Oh! there are girls and girls at Newnham and Girton. Best to see who was the happy winner before bolting. But, honestly, I don't see at present what you are to do. Is your uncle utterly hopeless?"

"Utterly."

"Consult old Abbot; he might frighten Richardson into letting you off some of the money."

"I am afraid he would only send me down at once; he has taken rather a dislike to me, I fancy."

Rivingston said nothing to this, and seemed lost in thought. Johnny crossed to the piano, and played a few bars, gradually shifting into some of the airs from "Patience," which the

previous conversation had put into his head. It is only when men are young that they can sit playing airs out of comic operas with probable ruin staring them in the face. Ruin, and nothing less than ruin, would it be to Jordan if he offended his uncle. Both young men were orphans ; but, whilst Rivingston had been left sufficiently well off to prevent him ever doing anything to increase his income, Jordan had been left penniless, for his father had lost everything in the failure of a large bank, and died soon afterwards broken-hearted. His mother followed her husband three months later.

Rivingston, as he gazed into the fire, felt truly distressed about his friend—more troubled, probably, than that friend himself. In the end he had an inspiration ; and this was it :

“Cease your playing, Johnny. I have a really brilliant idea this time—better than the lottery,” he said.

“ Well, out with it, old boy,” replied Jordan, coming down on the finger-board with a final crash, and swinging round on the music stool.

“ It’s not quite a new one. It’s something I meant to have told you about yesterday, but did not see you all day. What do you say to robbing a charity to pay your debt ? ”

“ Rob a charity ! ” exclaimed the other, and his face fell, for his friend’s manner had raised his hopes, and this seemed too absurd.

“ Don’t look so glum ; I mean what I say. For some weeks past I have been endeavouring to devise some stupendous deed, which shall leave the name of Rivingston indelibly stamped on the minds of the good people of this town. Yesterday Erskine and I laid our heads together, and the thing is as good as done.”

“ Well, but how does that affect me ? ”

“ In this way : Erskine suggested that it would be a great joke to engage the Guildhall,

and give an entertainment there — under assumed names of course.”

“ But how about robbing the charity ? ”

“ Simply, we intended to give the proceeds to charity, but I don't see why we should not give them to you.”

“ Many thanks ; but how will you get any one to come to the entertainment ? ”

“ I have been thinking it over, and I believe we could manage an *exposé* of spiritualism, and some rot about animal magnetism and mesmerism—we could manage some startling things by having a few confederates among the audience. We must ask the Vice to be patron of the affair—swear it's strictly scientific. There has been a fuss lately about some men going in for spiritualism, and I feel sure the old boy would like to see it exposed.”

“ But I see all kinds of difficulties. Of course you will have to be disguised—and well

disguised. Who will hire the rooms for you, and be your manager ? ”

“ Do you remember looking through the photos of old actors of the A. D. C. in Hill’s and Saunder’s the other day ? ”

Jordan assented.

“ In one of the oldest sets, there was a fellow got up as Lady Teazle.”

“ Yes, I remember him perfectly.”

“ He took to the London stage after he went down. Yesterday Erskine told me that he is related to him—second cousin, I think—and will do anything for him. He will, I hope, be our manager, and——”

“ Take all the trouble,” slipped in Jordan.

“ Exactly.”

“ Then you really mean what you’ve been saying,” said Johnny, who, up to this, had been rather incredulous.

“ Of course I do,” replied the other, a trifle indignantly.

“ Then it’s awfully good of you to take all this bother on my account.”

“ Not a bit ; don’t flatter yourself. It’s all for glory. I’ll run across the quad, fetch Erskine, and we can talk it over. It might be as well to make a rough sketch of the whole thing ;” saying which, Rivingston ran downstairs, and, in a few minutes, returned with their mutual friend.

Till the small hours of the morning did the three conspirators sit hatching out their plot. The scheme was considered from beginning to end ; and every part of it, with the exception of very minute details and the lecture itself, was written down carefully. Amongst other things, it was decided that at least six of their friends must be taken into their confidence, to act as confederates. Erskine’s letter to his cousin was written to be ready for the morning’s post.

Before the party separated, Jordan happened to mention certain suspicions he had of his gyp's dishonesty, and a plan was laid to put the matter to the test. But of this more anon.





CHAPTER III.

WHICH DESCRIBES A LUDICROUS DESCENT FROM
PATHOS TO BATHOS, AND GIVES THE VICE-
CHANCELLOR'S VIEWS ON THE UPROOTING OF
SPIRITUALISM.

SUNDAY afternoon at Cambridge. A bright
November day. Streams of undergraduates
and townspeople pouring out of Great St.
Mary's after hearing the University Sermon.
Down the aisle comes the Vice-Chancellor in
great state, preceded by the Squire Bedel
bearing the silver poker—irreverently so called ;
down the aisle comes the Proctor, followed by
his two faithful Bull-dogs, casting as he goes an
eye to the gallery, where a clumsy freshman,

in his haste to see the exit of the great man and the silver poker, has stumbled over a bench.

The last person has gone out, and Great St. Mary's is empty. Merrily sing out those far-famed chimes over the frosty air, and those of the good people of Cambridge who happen to be listening learn the time of day. King's Parade is alive with faces—young and old; pretty and ugly; faces of all kinds and classes. And at certain windows above may be seen merry students of mankind, burning the noxious weed, and gazing on the gay throng beneath—and one, I declare, has a pair of opera-glasses which, doubtless, he is using to study the delicate carving on that glorious chapel of King's College right facing him.

Come now into the quad of an ancient college. Just at this time it is tolerably quiet. It is not the quiet of theology, it is the quiet of luncheon. In less than an hour a few pianos

will be heard jingling—the tutor here is not severe ; only, whatever you do, don't play with the windows open during chapel.

A touching sermon was once thus spoilt. One May term, he—the tutor—was preaching for a charity to a large congregation. The sermon was *extempore*, but well prepared. The miseries of the poor heathen were being beautifully described—their lack of trousers—their want of flannel petticoats.

“How many of these, think you,” said he, “can be saved?” He paused a second for effect, as if awaiting an answer. He got one, and to the point. Gaily across the quad, and in at the chapel windows came the response :

“One little, two little, three little, four little, five little nigger boys.”

A second's silence. A horrified and dumb-founded preacher. A tittering assembly. Then in a louder and more emphatic tone followed the words :

“Six little, seven little, eight little, nine little, ten little nigger boys.”

All the pathos went out of that sermon ; and, it was weak of him, but he ended abruptly. The collection was a bad one ; “for,” said the congregation naturally, “with so few to be saved it isn’t worth the expense.”

Therefore, undergraduate, remember ; if you would not raise his wrath, play not during chapel time—and, above all, any tune but that.

The luncheons have come to an end, and the lunchers are variously engaged, smoking, writing, reading (light literature), constitutionalizing along the Madingley Road, and some, perhaps, are flirting, for even that is possible—and actually does occur occasionally—in this sober old town. But, bordering on the unmentionable, let us return to graver subjects. In that part of the grounds specially reserved for the fellows of the college—the

Fellows' Garden—walked three old men. One, the Great Man, now without his silver poker ; the two others, Masters of colleges who had been lunching with him. One of the Masters, the short and stout one (the other was tall and thin), was talking rather excitedly :

“ Yes, I learn from our porter, that he actually had a professional spiritualist, a medium from London, and that the whole room was turned upside down ; the table broken, the carpet burnt, and three chairs utterly damaged beyond repair. Abbot says that when he had the foolish young man up before him, he had the greatest trouble to know how to deal with him, and referred the case to me. I am to see the silly fellow to-morrow. Abbot says he poses as a martyr, looking on spiritualism as a part of his religious belief. The man must be mad.”

“ He must be sent down,” remarked the other Master. “ Should he remain here, he may

contaminate others. It would be a truly dreadful thing were a large number of the young men of this University to fall a prey to the machinations of cunning charlatans. Without personally attending their *séances*—as they are called—we have no means of ——”

“No, of course not,” interrupted the other; “and I am sure neither you nor I would dream of doing any such thing, but I feel the evil has spread farther than you think. The unfortunate young man informed Abbot that there are in the University over forty young men, all believers in this folly.”

“Oh, it’s dreadful, really too dreadful!” ejaculated the thin Master, horror-struck.

“What’s too dreadful?” asked the Vice-Chancellor.

He, being very old and absent-minded, had been thinking of something else. He was quickly put in possession of the subject of con-

versation, and after a few seconds' thought he said :

“ I have a letter here I received this morning which may be of some assistance to us. Read it aloud. I have mislaid my spectacles,” and gave it, as he spoke, into the hands of the thin Master. He, having examined the envelope and learned nothing from the outside, drew out the letter and, after a preliminary “ Ahem ! ” read :

“ ‘ 5, *Adelphi Terrace, Strand.*

“ ‘ November 20.

“ ‘ SIR,—I am desired by Professor Danesfield Saxelby to beg your kind patronage and approval for a lecture he proposes giving early next month, in the Guildhall of Cambridge. The professor has made it the one work of his life to inquire into what is commonly called spiritualism, and to expose the *mediums* and other swindlers who gain a living by imposing

on the credulity of simple-minded and ignorant people. He acts *with the best intentions*.

“Should the proposed lecture gain your kind approval and patronage, I shall immediately write to the Heads of the Colleges making them a similar request.

“I beg to remain, Sir,

“Your very Obedient Servant,

“WILLIAM SMALLWOOD.”

“To the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University.

“P.S.—I should add, that it has come to the ears of the Professor that certain well-known *mediums* have been to Cambridge, and held *séances* there; hence the desirability of counter-acting any effect they may have produced.—W. S.’”

“This comes most opportunely,” said he who had read the letter. “This is the very man who

will be able to open the eyes of these misguided youths. Of course you will do as he desires. He may certainly have my name as a patron, and I shall make a point of attending the lecture ; moreover, I shall urge the other Masters to do so."

"Very proper, very proper," assented the Vice-Chancellor. "It is certainly our duty to do all we can to fight against this dreadful belief. But how can we make the men attend the lecture ?"

"Give them the choice between that and being expelled the University."

"Oh, that would be too harsh. Before the lecture is delivered, I will purchase tickets for all of them, call them before me, and simply desire their attendance. I feel sure they will obey."

If there was a regret afterwards in the mind of Rivingston, it was concerned with this one

little incident. This kind-hearted old man, at his own expense, endeavouring to save from the clutches of the Evil One forty wrong-minded undergraduates by sending them to a bogus lecture, given by a bogus professor. But—there is always a “but”—as Johnny afterwards used to tell him, the Vice-Chancellor’s little plan worked out so successfully that he—Rivingston—had no reason to regret the imposture.

The Vice-Chancellor’s guests soon afterwards left him, and he tottered off to his rooms, there to enjoy his usual Sunday afternoon’s dose of divinity—and a nap.





CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH THE PLOT THICKENS, AND A FEW
SHORT REMARKS ARE GIVEN ON THE ART OF
COMPOSING A POSTER.

NEVER had plot worked out so smoothly and well as this one of our conspirators. Erskine's cousin, the actor, had written to say he would do everything he possibly could for them, that fortunately he was disengaged for three weeks, and that he would write off at once to the Vice, and let them know the result. The great man's reply was, as might be expected, favourable, and the other Heads of Colleges were written to. They all responded, highly approving of the lecture, and consenting to be patrons.

Much to the surprise of Rivingston and the rest, the Vice wrote a second letter saying that he proposed taking about forty tickets for the lecture, and desiring to know the prices at which they would be sold. That the discovery of the *medium's* visit to the town had turned out most fortunate for them, they could well suppose, but at this time they had not the slightest idea how much—*e.g.*, the forty tickets taken by the Vice—they owed to it.

On the strength of his success with the dons, Buller the actor, under the name of Smallwood, and acting as manager or agent for the professor, engaged the Big Room of the Guildhall for the 7th, 8th, and 9th of December. He also had preparatory posters put about the place. These first ones were remarkably simple and concise, merely—

*“Spiritualists Beware
December 7th, 8th, and 9th.”*

These were left up a week, irritating inquisitive people by their mysterious brevity, and exciting a lively curiosity throughout the town.

About this time Buller, having transacted all his previous business by writing, came up to Cambridge as a guest of Erskine, and in his own proper character. When next he came it would have to be with different name, hair, dress, and wearing spectacles.

It is said, that about this time also, Rivingston was half inclined to give up the idea, as the work appeared so great. To begin with, a dialogue had to be written, and learnt by heart ; and a dialogue which is to last for two hours and a half is no mean thing to commit to memory. Then, again, the confederates had to be coached, and nothing would satisfy Buller but that five rehearsals of the whole lecture, or rather lectures—for there were two—should be held before the seventh. To him—Buller—the

whole thing was child's play ; but then he was to take only a subordinate part, and, doubtless, he would by no means have liked to take Rivingston's place as the professor.

The evening before the actor left Cambridge, until such times as he should come up for the lecture, he dined in Jordan's rooms, in company with Rivingston and Erskine. During dinner, Johnny, putting on a very grave face, said :

“ I have a piece of news for you fellows.”

“ Well, what is it, Johnny ? ” asked Rivingston.

“ I have received a letter from the Vice ! ”

He said this in such a doleful way that the others' hearts were up in their mouths directly, thinking it was all up with the lecture.

“ Good heavens ! do go on : don't keep us in suspense like this,” burst out Rivingston, excitedly.

“ I will go on,” said Johnny, softly and sadly.

“ Listen to this ; ” and taking a letter from his pocket, he read :—

“ ‘ SIR,—It has come to my knowledge that you have several times attended *séances* held by professional *mediums* here, or in the neighbourhood. I sincerely trust you have visited these meetings merely out of curiosity, and not as a believer in spiritualism. In case, however, any of the trickery you have witnessed has taken a hold on your mind, I enclose you a ticket for a lecture, to be delivered by an able professor early next month, and which I beg you will attend. You will there, I am sure, learn the wicked way in which you have been imposed upon.

“ ‘ Yours faithfully,

“ ‘ DECIMUS D. DEACON,

“ ‘ *Vice-Chancellor.*

“ ‘ To J. Jordan, Esq.’ ”

Before Johnny had finished reading this

letter, the others were in fits of laughter. The joke was too good. As a matter of fact, he had been to several *séances* lately—this being his share of the work of preparing the lecture—and he had fortunately been able to pick up many valuable hints. Amongst other things, he had seen the cabinet trick done; between them the conspirators had devised an excellent imitation of it. The Vice-Chancellor had been told of these visits, and not being certain that Jordan was a believer in spiritualism, he had determined to send him a letter on the subject privately, and not call him to account with the forty spiritualistic undergraduates.

“Egad, Jordan, you humbugged us nicely over that, I must say,” said Buller. “Your long face made me think something awful had happened. By the by, it’s time we drew out our big posters, and had them printed. The moment the Vice has distributed the forty

tickets, as he clearly means to do, among some of the undergrads, we must have our bills stuck up."

"Why not before?" asked Rivingston.

"Well, you see, they will have to be rather strong to catch the public eye—for I suppose you want a good audience; and if the Vice were to see them before he has given his tickets away, he might smell a rat and draw back; but when once these tickets are given, he'll be bound to go on with it, or get horribly jeered at all round."

"Then if you fellows have finished, we will have the decks cleared and get to work," said Johnny, and the suggestion was acted on.

Before the party broke up, the following magnificent poster was drawn out, and, with some slight rearrangements and improvements by the printer, was seen in all the prominent places of the town before thirty-six hours had passed.

UNDER THE DISTINGUISHED PATRONAGE
OF THE
VICE-CHANCELLOR & THE HEADS OF COLLEGES.

GREAT EXPOSURE OF SPIRITUALISM,
EXPLANATIONS AND EXAMPLES
OF
ANIMAL MAGNETISM, MESMERISM,
AND
THOUGHT-READING,
BY
PROFESSOR DANESFIELD SAXELBY,
AT THE
GUILDHALL, CAMBRIDGE,
DECEMBER 7th, 8th, and 9th.

The Entertainment on the 7th will be confined to Spiritualism; on the two succeeding nights, Animal Magnetism and Mesmerism.

*Doors open at 7, to commence 7.30. Carriages at 10.30.
Plan of room at Mr. Lyng's, King's Parade.*

N.B.—The Professor particularly requests that nervous and hysterical people of either sex will not attend his Entertainment, as, after this notice, he cannot be responsible for the consequences.

WILLIAM SMALLWOOD, *Manager.*

As William Smallwood, otherwise Buller, was penning the last lines of the *nota bene*, he thought to himself—

“If that don’t fetch the ladies, I’m a nigger!”

“I thought it was to be called a lecture,” said Rivingston, who was looking over his shoulder.

“If you call it that, you will have an audience of possibly fifty. No, call it an entertainment, and we shall have a full house. Few care to be lectured, but every one likes to be entertained;” thus spoke Buller, whose knowledge of the world had greatly increased since he had taken to the stage.





CHAPTER V.

WHICH BEGINS WITH AN *EXEAT*, AND ENDS WITH
A FULL-DRESS REHEARSAL. PROFESSOR DANES-
FIELD SAXELBY AND HIS MANAGER COME ON
THE SCENE.

DECEMBER the first arrived, and, to the joy of Rivingston and his friends, all the reserved seats for the first night were sold. Jordan writing to Buller told him of this. Buller replied by return of post :

“ *Sheridan Club,*

December 3rd.

“ DEAR JORDAN,—Have a large notice put in Lyng’s window—That all original reserved seats are sold, but a couple of extra rows will

be added to meet the demand. This will be a good advertisement. I shall be up on the 6th, for a full-dress rehearsal—confederates and all.

“Yours in haste,

“FRED BULLER.”

On the morning of the 6th of December Rivingston went to his tutor with a long face, and said :

“A very dear relation is leaving England for the Antipodes next week ; would you mind my going to Town to pass a few days with him ?”

It was true that Rivingston had a relative going abroad about this time, but not a dear one by any means.

“I am afraid it will interfere sadly with your reading,” remarked the tutor, with just the smallest possible sarcastic twinkle in the corner of his eye.

Rivingston, noting the twinkle, said regretfully :

“Yes, sir, I feel it will; but, even if I were to stay, I doubt if I could bring my mind to work.”

“Very well; I will give you your *exeat*. When do you propose to come back?”

“On the tenth.”

“Here it is then,” said the tutor, giving Rivingston a slip of paper with “*Exeat* Rivingston, December 6th to 10th,” written on it, and thinking as he did so what an annoying way the undergraduates’ relations had of going abroad, being taken ill, married, etc., in term time.

Rivingston hurried to the Porter’s Lodge, gave in his *exeat*, and was quickly whirled away to the station in a cab that was waiting for him.

Once at the station, the “dear relative” languishing for him in London somehow slipped his memory, and he took ticket and train for Hitchen. On arriving there, he left his portmanteau in the cloak-room, saying he would

probably not want it for two or three days. After this he lunched at an hotel, and wandered about the town for a couple of dreary hours, greatly wondering why people lived there, and feeling a curious desire to know the number per head of the population who committed suicide, and how many went mad. Both, he thought, must be considerable. At five he strolled to the station. At five fifteen, amid a great outcry of "echinechinechin!" after the usual intelligible way of porters, the "down train" from London came snorting and blustering into the station. With it came the professor's manager, Mr. Smallwood, his head and shoulders half out of the window, and anxiously scanning the people on the platform. Seeing Rivingston, he darted out of his compartment, caught him by the arm, and in a few seconds they were confabulating together in a comfortable railway carriage.

Mr. Smallwood was speaking.

“The train was awfully full,” he said ; “but I gave the guard an enormous tip, with a promise of more if he kept the carriage for me alone all the way down. I have a few things for you in this bag, and in the van there is a box full of wigs, clothes, making-up material, and everything we are likely to need.”

Mr. Smallwood wore a wig in which showed a few grey hairs, a trifle long, perhaps, and carefully parted in the middle. His face was clean shaved, but under his chin, from ear to ear, ran a band of short grizzly hair—an arrangement frequently affected by elderly gentlemen with delicate chests. His coat, waistcoat, and trousers, were of black cloth, with just a suspicion of a clerical cut about them. On his nose were a pair of gold spectacles, and his general appearance was that of a middle-aged man who might be a dissenting minister,

doctor, musician, schoolmaster, or anything highly respectable and genteel. Opening his bag he said :

“ Put on these dark trousers ; this long overcoat will cover everything else. I am afraid I shall make you very uncomfortable with the hair I am going to stick on your face. In my hat-box I have a delightfully ancient top hat which you must exchange for your wideawake.”

At this point a veil must be drawn for a few minutes, rising as the professor and his manager step out of the train at Cambridge. Having found their boxes and other belongings they were driven away to rooms previously engaged at the “ Hoop.”

Mr. Smallwood has been described ; why not the professor ? In the cab he had said to his manager :

“ I have licked the prisoner of Chillon out and out in the matter of grey hair.”

“How?” asked the other.

“He took a night, I believe, to whiten his hair. We managed it in ten minutes.”

“No, you are not exactly right,” replied Mr. Smallwood; “how long it took him is a matter of considerable uncertainty. Byron beats about the bush. It would be simpler for him to have said what he meant. The poem begins like this—

“My hair is grey but not with years,
Nor grew it white
In a single night,
As men's have grown from sudden fears.

and there the matter ends, to be a puzzle to the end of all eternity.”

“Well, as the fates of empires do not depend on the solution of the question,” said the exposé of spiritualism, with a laugh, “it will not trouble my rest to-night.”

The professor had a magnificent grey beard

which mingled with moustaches of similar hue, giving him an aged and venerable appearance. Bushy grey eyebrows overhung a pair of sparkling blue eyes; and the colour on the small patch of cheek which the hair allowed to be visible, and the upright figure, showed what a fine, healthy, well-preserved old man he was.

“With that ‘make-up,’” said the manager, “you need hardly trouble about making much change in your voice. You are unrecognizable.”

“Yes, I have lost my identity, am unrecognizable, and yet I am not happy,” said the professor, in a stagey tone. “To tell you the truth, I feel deucedly uncomfortable.”

After a substantial dinner at the “Hoop,” Mr. Smallwood inquired the way to Trinity College, saying the professor wished to take a short walk before going to bed. A waiter gave the desired information; and, putting on their clerical overcoats, the two sallied forth.

Without much difficulty they found their way to Trinity, but not so much as casting a glance at that ancient and venerable foundation, they passed on; and, taking a turn to the left, entered Green Street. Evidently the professor had been in the locality before, for, without hesitation, he marched up to a house where kept ¹ one Huskins, a great friend of Johnny Jordan. Without ringing the bell he opened the hall door—having previously observed that there was no one about the street—and walked upstairs, entering a large room on the first floor, the manager coming close upon his heels.

In the room were assembled Johnny Jordan, Huskins, Erskine, and some four or five of their particular friends.

“I fear I have made a mistake,” said the professor, making as though he would withdraw.

¹ Lodged.

“These rooms are mine,” said Huskins ;
“do you wish to see me ?”

“We wished to see a Mr. Huskins,” remarked
the manager.

“My name is Huskins,” replied he of that
name.

“Perhaps I had better introduce myself,”
suggested the visitor, in a conciliatory tone ;
“I am Professor Danesfield Saxelby, and this
is my manager, Mr. Smallwood.”

A roar of laughter greeted the announcement,
and Jordan rushed up to take the speaker by
the hand, crying :

“By Jove, old fellow, I never saw anything
like it! Though we expected you, I never
guessed for a moment who you were.”

The professor waved him off and said
solemnly :

“For heaven’s sake don’t touch me, or I
shall tumble to pieces! my right eyebrow is
loose as it is.”

“We have come,” interrupted the practical manager, “for a full-dress rehearsal, which will take about three hours. It is eight o’clock, so we must begin at once. Now, professor, to work.”

Great St. Mary’s was chiming its most extensive chime—that of midnight—when the hardworked lecturer and his domineering manager returned to their hotel, where, after a short chat and a smoke, they went to bed.





CHAPTER VI.

GIVING A FIRST-RATE METHOD OF EXPOSING SPIRITUALISM.

THE morning of the seventh broke grey and lowering. At breakfast the manager inquired anxiously of the landlord as to the state of the barometer; explaining afterwards to the professor that a wet night would diminish their receipts considerably. About ten o'clock the sun appeared to rise, and shone from that hour until three o'clock in the afternoon, when it buried itself in a bank of mist. Even whilst shining it only did so in a fitful, languid, glimmering sort of way; like a sun which was

spending the greater portion of his time in other countries, and whose shining powers were "really too exhausted, you know," before rising on the Cambridge horizon.

All that day the Vice-Chancellor and the before-mentioned Masters of Colleges were in great spirits ; for, said they amongst themselves :

"To-night those foolish young men will be shown the trickery of this spiritualism in which they have been believing."

The professor and Mr. Smallwood spent a great portion of the day in the Guildhall, arranging certain matters. The former, usually so lighthearted, was a trifle nervous, but the manager was sanguine of success. That morning he had paid a visit to the printer and bill-sticker, and, before twelve o'clock, the town was informed by huge placards that the professor had arrived.

About half-past six o'clock a small crowd

began to gather around the Guildhall, and by seven o'clock this small crowd had become a great one. In it there was much crushing and crowding to be near the doors when they should open. In the thick of it all was Jordan, very anxious indeed to get a good seat, for the Vice-Chancellor's ticket had been only a two-shilling one, for an unreserved place. At last the doors are open, and a crowd of pushing, scrambling people are rushing up the broad staircase. In a very few minutes all the unreserved places are filled.

One little knot of undergraduates was very noisy, so noisy, in fact, that the manager feared for the success of the entertainment unless some means were taken to quiet them. In consequence he held a short consultation with the professor, with the result that, at the time the entertainment should commence, the manager, and not his colleague, stepped on to the platform and

bowed. The audience, taking him for the professor, applauded.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he commenced, very gravely, “I regret to have to inform you that the professor has been taken suddenly ill, and we have been obliged to summon a doctor, who has arrived, and is now with him. The professor has had these attacks before; and, as they are usually of very short duration, he desires me to say that after a short delay he will give you the lecture—that is, of course, if the doctor will allow him to do so. In a few minutes I shall be able to tell you for certain; and, I need not say, that in the event of the professor remaining too ill to appear, your money will be returned to you.” Another bow, and he was gone through a side door.

A buzz of conversation immediately arose from the audience, as to the hows, whys, and whats of the professor's illness.

They were not kept long waiting. Again the manager appeared, and this time with a cheerful countenance.

“Ladies and gentlemen, the doctor, without absolutely prohibiting it, declares it to be very unwise for the professor to appear this evening ; but, notwithstanding this expression of opinion, the professor has determined, rather than disappoint you, to give the entertainment. I would only ask in return that all of you—gentlemen of the University and residents of the town alike—will be as quiet as possible, as any noise or interruption will greatly add to the fatigue of lecturing.”

A sympathetic murmur rose from the audience. The manager again disappeared, and joined the professor in the little room, commonly called the Alderman's Parlour.

“You will find everything right now. There are some noisy fellows who might have spoilt

it all, but they are bound to be quiet after what I have said. Now, go in and win!" and, saying, this Mr. Smallwood patted the learned man disrespectfully on the back.

The professor was moving off into the Hall when, dab—dab—dab, came something soft and fluffy in his face.

"What are you about?" he spluttered.

"Only a little powder. You are supposed to be ill, you know," was the reply.

At last the patient audience was rewarded. The tall, pale, grey-bearded man came out from the door on the right, and took his stand before a little table, on which were the regulation decanter of cold water and tumbler. The people there, being Britons, admired the pluck of the man in lecturing against the doctor's advice, and gave him a couple of rounds of applause. He bowed and felt for the moment as if he would give everything he possessed to

be anywhere else. Fortunately the table cover hid the tendency of his legs to collapse, but any nervousness the audience noticed they naturally put down to his supposed recent illness. He saw before him a sea of human faces, looking very blurred and indistinct. Gradually his sight became clearer, and he perceived Jordan looking at him anxiously from the centre of the hall, in the row immediately behind the reserved seats. Scattered about the three front rows he noticed Huskins, Erskine, and the other confederates. He attempted to speak but found his tongue unmanageable.

“Take a glass of water,” whispered Smallwood from the side, “and then fire away.”

He did so, and his tongue getting into working order, he commenced his lecture. Once having got under weigh, the rest was all fair sailing.

Having commenced with an apology for the

unavoidable delay, he touched lightly on his subject.

“ Though I trust I shall be able to amuse and entertain you this evening,” he said, “ you must bear in mind that I have higher and nobler objects. I am here to discover shams, unveil impostures, checkmate charlatans; in short, to lay bare to your view the whole groundwork of that monstrous imposition, popularly called ‘ Spiritualism.’ ”

Here followed applause from a certain section of the audience—the Vice and his following; apathy from another section—the rank and file of undergraduates; whilst from the forty martyrs to the cause—the forty believers in Spiritualism whom the Vice had presented with tickets—came no sound, but their faces indicated their disgust, indignation, and disapprobation.

“ Before I proceed further,” continued the

lecturer, "I should like to have on the platform four or five gentlemen—members of the University for preference—whom I shall call my committee, and who will give me any assistance I may require in my illustrations. They will, at the same time, be an assurance to you of my good faith. I mean, that I am not acting with the spirits, as some spiritualists have suggested."

He then descended the platform, and, walking amongst the audience, selected four undergraduates—Erskine, Huskins, and two others—who, at his invitation, stepped on to the platform, and were given chairs at the side. There were now left amongst the audience certain other confederates whose services would be required the following night. Smallwood had said that there must be at least one fresh face, or persons attending both nights might have cause for suspicion.

"Unfortunately," continued the professor, "I

seem to have chosen four gentlemen all of whom profess themselves disbelievers in Spiritualism. I should like one spiritualist on the committee. Will any one who answers to that description, and is willing to oblige me, stand up?"

Four out of the forty martyrs, after a slight hesitation, arose; and with them Johnny Jordan.

The lecturer walking down the hall scanned the faces of the five. Stopping before Jordan, he said :

"You look more of a dreamer than the others; kindly step on to the platform."

The committee being thus formed, the lecture proceeded. The professor, in forcible language, brought out all the strong points in his favour. He showed how Spiritualism is only practised by an inferior class of men, none of whom have the least claim to respectability. He pointed

out how none of these men worked for the good of their cause merely, but that one and all made, or tried to make, a living out of it. He gave short sketches of many of the cases in which mediums had been prosecuted, and found to be rank impostors.

“Not that this proves my case,” he said; “but it is a very strong argument in my favour.”

He then pointed out that no benefits had ever come to any believers in Spiritualism through that belief—barring the professors of it, who were but doubtful believers after all. He spoke of the childish folly that was practised at *séances*, and the ridiculous things said and done by the supposed spirits, which were enough to make any sensible person ashamed of, and indignant with, his ancestors—supposing for a moment it was they who thus manifested themselves. He called to their notice how the

spirits could only be raised up in the dark, and how a very ordinary conjuror could do far more astonishing things in broad daylight.

“I must now,” said the professor, “ask you to give your attention to what I may call the practical part of this entertainment. You all, doubtless, know that the usual mode of communication between the supposed spirits and us mortals is by means of little taps—or ‘raps,’ as they are usually called. I will explain to you how these ‘raps’ are made. The most common method is by a dislocation of one of the joints of the big toe or thumb, a thing many people can do, and what is popularly called ‘putting one’s thumb out of joint.’ By leaning the elbow thus—on any ready-to-hand sounding board, and dislocating the thumb, a very fine ‘rap’ will be heard. I believe, however, it is necessary to be double-jointed to do this. I must now beg absolute

silence or the 'rap' will not be heard in this large room."

Immediate silence followed. The professor placed his elbow on the grand piano which is usually kept in the hall for entertainments, the lower arm and hand pointing upwards. His thumb was seen to move, and a "rap" sounded clearly through the hall. Some of the forty martyrs change colour; they had heard such music before.

"I will now, if the ladies will excuse me, take off my shoes, and show you the other method of 'rapping,' which can be successfully followed when the medium's hands are clasped by persons sitting in a ring—a custom usually followed at *séances*."

Off came the professor's shoe, and he leaned heavily with his foot on the boards of the platform. Close observers and those in the front seats then saw his ankle give a twitch,

and another "rap" was heard. Then followed a number of twitches of his ankle, and a corresponding number of "raps." The audience applauded and the professor bowed, inwardly blessing Johnny Jordan, from whom the sounds had really proceeded; being nothing less than flips of his finger on the lid of a small wooden box. Jordan had kept his gown on for greater effect, and he easily managed this under its shelter.

The manager had, from his acquaintance with professional people, discovered, among other things, the dislocation principle of rapping. Unfortunately the professor, after many attempts, found he could not manage it, so it was arranged that he should illustrate and Jordan should make the noise. The unconscious audience were perfectly satisfied, and the rapping passed off pleasantly for all concerned.

The professor next spoke of the cabinet

trick, and proposed to show how it was done, first in darkness, afterwards in light. With the aid of his committee he dragged forward a kind of three-sided screen, the inside of the back of which faced the audience, the sides being placed parallel to one another. Across the front ran a brass rod, and from this hung a curtain ; the whole forming a little cupboard.

A chair having been placed at the back of the cabinet, the professor entered, sat down facing the audience, and asked one of the committee to tie his hands behind him.

Now at the back of the cupboard, about two feet from the ground, and six inches apart, were two small holes through which the ends of a piece of rope had been passed from outside, and hung down inside the cabinet. To these rope ends were the hands of the professor tied, and it should be noticed that any one going at the back of the cabinet could, by severing the

rope, immediately set the professor at liberty. Any little trick of this kind could hardly be noticed by the audience who had, of course, to pin their faith to the integrity of the committee.

“Any of the audience who think the committee have not tied a safe knot can come up and judge for themselves,” said the professor; but no one stirred, every confidence being placed in the faithless undergraduates.

In the cabinet were now placed a tambourine, a penny whistle, and several other noisy instruments, also a hammer, some nails, and a piece of board.

“Immediately the curtain is drawn, turn down the lights!” ordered the lecturer, “and let the committee stand closely round to see that all is fair.”

They at once surrounded the cabinet, and, on Jordan drawing the curtain, the guardian of the hall turned down the gas. Immediately most

astonishing manifestations took place. The tambourine rattled, the whistle screeched, and a great noise of hammering was heard. After a couple of seconds of this hubbub, the tambourine, gleaming with phosphorus, was seen whirled about in front of the cabinet, and, after being thrown high into the air, came down with a crash and a jingle on to the platform. A short pause ensued, and then from the top of the cabinet rose a ghostly-looking thing, the outlines of which bore some faint resemblance to the human figure draped in muslin, and smothered with phosphorus. This stopped stationary for a few seconds, then wavered from side to side, descended, and disappeared. More hammering, whistling, and other noises followed, in the midst of which the professor called out cheerfully :

“ We are full of spirits to-night, and they are very lively. Turn up the lights, hall-keeper ! ”

After a very slight delay, the lights were turned up, and everything was seen just as before. The cabinet was closed, and the committee stood around it.

“Draw back the curtain!” was heard from within, and Jordan did so.

“Are the knots as you left them?”

The committee examined them, and assented.

“Did you see anything happen?”

The committee replied in the negative—truthfully, indeed, for it had been far too dark for that.

The audience were wonderstruck. There was the professor as firmly fixed as before, and yet he had appeared to undo and retie these knots with the greatest ease.

On the lecturer being released he gave this explanation with which the audience had to be satisfied :

“Ahem! It having been found that the

human hand can, with practice, be made to contract so as to slip through any circle not smaller than the wrist, it followed that hardly a knot could be tied round the wrist through which the hand could not be pulled. Out of this discovery arose the cabinet trick, so greatly used by spiritualists. My hands once being freed in this manner, it was easy to sound the tambourine, blow the whistle, and to hammer the nails into the board. The ghost, also, was a simple matter. At the top of a telescope handle, which I carry in my pocket, I fix a mask. A piece of whalebone put across the handle, just below the head, forms the shoulders and a support for a few yards of thin muslin. A little phosphorus sprinkled over all completes the spirit. I have now, ladies and gentlemen, exposed, and explained to you the great cabinet trick of the dark *séance*, one which took me many years of patient inquiry to

discover, and much painful practice to imitate successfully.”

The professor bowed, and refreshed himself from the decanter, and a storm of applause echoed through the hall.

The professor's explanation, plausible as it may seem, was a fraud. The hand cannot be drawn through the circumference of the wrist, and the professor's hands had been firmly tied all the time. Jordan had gone into the cabinet and worked the hammer and nails, whilst Erskine played the tambourine. Meanwhile, the rest of the committee got the ghost ready and “raised” him at the proper time. Thanks to the many rehearsals all this was done with the greatest rapidity, and it fairly brought down the house.

A light *séance* followed. The professor was again tied in the cabinet, the committee taking their stand at the back, sides, and front, to see

fair play. On the curtain being drawn, the tambourine, whistle, and hammer resounded through the hall as before; the professor's hands were seen above the cabinet, and, to wind up, everything was thrown out over the top of the cupboard, the order was given for the curtain to be drawn back, and there was the professor seated and, *to all appearance*, securely tied. The committee gravely examined the knots, and assured the audience it was all right. Now the depravity of this committee was dreadful, for the rope had been cut by one of them at the back of the cabinet, immediately the curtain had been drawn across the front. Thus the lecturer was able to work his own sweet will with the musical instruments and other things. When exposed to the view of the audience he had placed his hands behind him, as if tied, and obviously no one but the committee could see whether such was the case

or not. The spectators were, naturally, greatly astonished at the apparent facility with which the professor slipped his hands in and out of the knots.

Of course there was a good deal more in the lecture than has been written here, and the two cabinet tricks brought the entertainment to a successful close. In a few simple words the professor thanked the audience for their kind attention, and trusted his lecture had converted any infatuated followers of Spiritualism who might be present.

“To-morrow evening,” he said, “I propose to give some explanations and examples of Animal Magnetism, Thought-reading, and Mesmerism, which I can promise will be highly entertaining. I have now only to give my best thanks to my committee, who have so kindly assisted me this evening; and, as a slight return, I shall have much pleasure in

giving them orders for to-morrow and the succeeding evening ; and possibly, gentlemen,"—turning to Jordan, Erskine, Huskins, and the others—"you will do me the honour to again act as my committee."

To this, as had been previously arranged, they agreed, and the audience, highly pleased, passed out to the soul-stirring, though somewhat familiar sounds of "God Save the Queen," played on that same grand piano from which the raps had issued a couple of hours before.

The professor and his manager had a chat that night in the seclusion of their bed-chamber—they had a double-bedded room. The former was strangely altered. His beard, eyebrows, and long hair had disappeared, but the grey moustache remained.

"I never endured such agony," said he, "as when I was in that cabinet during the dark

séance. My hands were firmly tied, a horrid fly was buzzing around my head, and settling and flying off again every second. To add to my miseries, my beard irritated me to such an extent that I nearly pulled it off when my hands were released."

"Think what we actors have to endure in that way," replied the other; "but we get used to it like the eels. By gad, Jordan is a lucky fellow to have such a friend as you! Why, we have cleared nearly two hundred pounds to-night. You could not have done better if you had been a real, instead of a bogus, professor."

"I could never have done it without your help, so Johnny must thank you for it all. But let's turn in now, I feel awfully sleepy. Lecturing is rather exhausting work."

And turn in they did, and slept the sleep of the righteous.



CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH THE COMMITTEE ARE MESMERISED,
AND THE PROFESSOR DISCOVERS A SAD CASE
OF DRUNKENNESS.

THERE was not quite such a good attendance at the second evening's entertainment, but a fair house nevertheless. The professor had much the same committee as the night before, and, after a few introductory remarks, proceeded to mesmerise Mr. John Jordan. Having seated him in a chair facing the audience, he held before his gaze a small ball of wood attached to about a foot of string.

“Keep your eyes fixed steadfastly on this,”

he said, and he then raised the ball until nothing could be seen of the subject's eyes but their whites. After having held it in this position for a few seconds, he placed two of the fingers of his left hand close to the ball, and immediately in the line of sight. He then slowly moved his hand towards the subject's face, carefully keeping the tips of his two fingers in the line between the ball and Jordan's eyes. As these two fingers slowly approached, and almost touched the eyelids, the subject closed his eyes, and the professor declared him to be in the mesmeric trance.

"I will now ask him a few questions," said the mesmerist, "and I anticipate no difficulty in getting truthful answers. Pray tell me, sir, where did you dine this evening?"

For a few moments there came no reply; but, on the question being repeated, Jordan answered, as if speaking in his sleep:

“ In *hall*.”

“ Of what college ? ”

“ Trinity.”

“ How old are you ? ”

“ Twenty-three.”

“ Were you ever drunk ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Often ? ”

“ Not very often.”

“ I think,” said the mesmerist to the laughing audience, “ that it would not be advisable for me to question my subject too closely on his private affairs. But I can make him do more than this. Put out your arm, sir.”

Jordan did so.

“ Get up ; move your chair to the side of the platform, and sit there for the present.”

To the astonishment of the spectators Jordan obeyed, doing as he was ordered much after the fashion of a sleep-walker or automaton.

“ I now propose to mesmerise some more of my committee,” said the lecturer ; but to this they showed a natural reluctance. Huskins went so far as to say that having seen that the professor could make them answer any questions he liked, he had the strongest objection to being mesmerised with the certainty of being made a fool of. However, on a solemn promise being given that nothing should be asked of them, Erskine, Huskins, and two others allowed themselves to be put into a mesmeric trance. That having been done without difficulty, the mesmerist made them stand in a row, and put them through a most ridiculous drill, which fairly convulsed the audience with laughter. After this, under the professor’s orders, they took a little gentle exercise—a short game of leapfrog.

“ Kiss your hands three times,” commanded the lecturer, and they did so. “ Now stand in

a row at the back of the stage with your backs to the audience, and hold your right hands above your heads," and this was also done.

"I propose now to give you," said the lecturer, "a short explanation of my method of Mesmerism ; but I would ask, first, if there is any one else in the hall who wishes to be mesmerised?"

In making this offer the professor thought that after the ridiculous exhibition he had made of his committee, no one would care to follow suit ; but he was mistaken.

It so happened that in the front seats was a freshman, who had, during the lecture, been indulging in many sneering and sarcastic remarks to his friends, at the cost of the lecturer. "Mesmerism was all rot ; he wished he was on the platform. Saxelby wouldn't make a fool of him ; he'd show him he couldn't mesmerise anybody he liked"—and so on. Of course,

immediately the professor gave the general invitation, the freshman's friends (?) did all in their power to persuade him to accept it, and, after some trouble, succeeded.

Nature had not been kind to this individual, having given him that peculiar look of foolish presumption which is always noticeable at a glance. He was a very little man, with rather a yellow face, and a nose held several inches too high. As he stepped grandly on to the platform, and said in a squeaky voice, that the professor could try to mesmerise him if he liked, a slight titter was heard in the hall.

It may be supposed that this little cock-sparrow's appearance on the platform placed the lecturer in a quandary. Undoubtedly it gave him cause for considerable uneasiness. He had, however, well considered with the secretary all dangers of this kind, and a scheme for overcoming them had been arranged. At

the very worst, he had only to say that the subject was a bad one for mesmerism, and one over whom he had no power.

“ Well, sir,” he said to the little man ; “ so you wish to be mesmerised ? ”

The freshman bowed his head with a show of dignity.

“ You will not mind answering me a few questions first, I presume ? ” queried the professor.

“ Oh, that rather depends what they are,” was the slightly impertinent reply.

“ Are you not excessively nervous ? ”

“ Oh, no.”

“ But I feel sure you are.”

“ Then you’re wrong ; that’s all I can say.”

“ Kindly inform me if you have a weak heart ? You will excuse me asking the question, but I have to exercise the greatest care whom I mesmerise.”

“No; my heart is strong enough, I believe.”

“But you have fainted more than once in your life, have you not?”

“Well, I may have done so,” replied the freshman, getting a little fidgety.

“Ah! I thought so,” said the professor, looking very serious; “allow me to place my ear over your heart.”

“Oh, if it comes to that, you know; if you—er—think there’s any danger, I won’t trouble you to-night.”

“I really can’t say if there is danger or not without first listening to the beatings of your heart.”

“Go on with it, Jones; don’t be afraid,” called out some one in the hall; and probably on account of this aspersion on his valour, the freshman allowed the examination of his heart to take place, looking rather foolish meanwhile.

“There is nothing radically wrong,” remarked

the lecturer, "but you are evidently a nervous subject, and I should strongly advise you not to be mesmerised. At the same time, I am quite prepared to proceed if you wish it ; only it is my duty to warn you first."

Jones' face turned a shade more yellow, and he asked :

"Why, what's the matter with me ?"

"I am not prepared to go into that with you ; but I might not be able to get you out of the trance, perhaps for a day or two."

"In that case," said the freshman, with a look of relief, thinking he had had a sufficiently good reason to retire gracefully, "I will not trouble you," and he turned to leave the platform ; but cries of "Don't be afraid ! You'll be all right ! Go on with it !" came from his friends, and were quickly taken up by the undergraduates at the back of the hall.

It is doubtful whether the professor or his

would-be subject was most troubled. The freshman hesitated a moment. "Which evil was least?" he asked himself; "to sleep for a day or two, or be considered a poltroon by one's acquaintances?" Undoubtedly the former, and, so thinking, he turned sharply to sit down on the chair in which previous subjects had been mesmerised. Unfortunately, a screw which had worked up a little out of the old platform caught his foot. He stumbled, and fell at full length on the dusty boards. Mr. Smallwood flew to his assistance, and, ready to take advantage of every incident, said, as he passed the lecturer: "Say the man's drunk, and I will soon get rid of him."

The professor quickly grasped the idea, and made a neat little speech, explaining that immediately the gentleman came on to the platform, he perceived that he was under the influence of some stimulating drink—in short,

inebriated ; and that he had endeavoured to shield him as much as possible, by prevailing on him—without success—to leave the platform, making the excuse that mesmerism would be dangerous in his case. Under the circumstances, the best thing would be for his friends to get him home as soon as possible.

The unfortunate freshman's feelings during this little oration are easier imagined than described. He had not a word to say. With his gown awry and dusty, his hair ruffled, his face flushed and bearing a confused expression from the suddenness and strangeness of the accusation, his appearance fully bore out the statements of the lecturer. Though as sober as judges are popularly supposed to be, he was, for the moment, reduced to apparent idiotcy.

Mr. Smallwood had been careful to keep hold of him as if he required support, and immediately the professor finished his little

speech, and before the wretched man had time to collect his senses, hurried him out of the hall.

The following day the inebriate was *hauled* before his college tutor, who had been present at the lecture, and received a severe reprimand.

“ How can you presume, sir, to say you were not intoxicated, when I saw you in that condition ? ” said the angry don.





CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH MESMERISM IS MADE EASY, AND THE COMMITTEE WHILST IN A TRANCE DO STRANGE THINGS.

WHEN the confusion caused by the foregoing incident was over, the professor turned his attention to his unfortunate confederates, who, all this time, had been standing with their backs to the audience, and with their right arms outstretched.

“ Before I give my promised explanation of mesmerism, and as I do not require the presence of my committee, I will send them to execute some little commissions for me,” said the lecturer. And turning to Johnny Jordan :

“You, sir, go across the Market Place to Thurston’s and buy me a shilling’s-worth of their nicest sweets.”

Jordan marched out immediately, in an automatic kind of way, to purchase the sweets. Huskins followed him, bound to buy a mop in Bridge Street. Erskine and the others were sent respectively in search of four pounds of tripe, a chignon, and a bassinette ; the professor indicating in each case where the things were to be purchased. There was still one committee-man left on the platform ; motioning him to a seat, the lecturer continued :

“You will have observed that I have used no mysterious means to produce this extraordinary effect on my committee. What I have just done is Mesmerism pure and simple. There is no magic in it, no Spiritualism. It is, in fact, hardly more than a mechanical operation which any one can do with practice. I worked at

this two hours a day for more than a year, and in the end succeeded. When I have explained it you will be surprised, and, I doubt not, almost disappointed at its simplicity. Professional mesmerists, who gain their living by imposing on the credulous, employ magnetic rods and other mysterious means which are introduced only to mystify the audience, and for no other purpose. The actual mesmeric trance is, in all cases, effected exactly as you have seen me effect it, and in no other way. You probably observed that I placed a small ball, suspended by a string, before the face of the subject; the ball was of ordinary deal, painted white, and the string was common whipcord. You may also have noticed that I directed the subject to fix his eyes on the ball, which he did. I then raised the ball till the subject's eyes—always following it—were turned upwards as far as possible, when I held it steadily in one position

until I observed the pupils of the eyes contract, and afterwards dilate. On their being dilated to their fullest extent, which happened in about fifteen seconds, I let two fingers of my right hand approach the eyes, which closed as this took place, and the subject was mesmerised. If I had chosen, I could have pierced his ears, sewn his nose to his cheek, or even cut off his fingers without giving him pain. You will say this is not an explanation but a description. In a few words I will put the whole reason before you. The fixed stare of the subject severely fatigued the retinal nerves, and when my fingers approached the eyes, the eyelids naturally closed. You will often have observed that this is a natural and spontaneous act when the eyes are threatened in any way. The fatigue of the nerves produced transient paralysis in the eyelids, and considerable muscular fatigue, the result being that they could not

be opened. Much attention having been paid to one object, the mind naturally became vacant. We have now three conditions, all tending to produce sleep: the eyelids closed, the delicate frontal nerves exhausted, and the mind vacant. The result is sleep, and of a mesmeric kind; in short, a mesmeric trance. You now know all I, or any one else, can tell you on this subject; and should any person here wish to become a mesmerist, he can easily verify the truth of my statement, by practising for a few hours daily, on some patient subject, in the way I have described."

The professor here paused, and the audience, delighted at being initiated into these mysteries, and feeling half amateur mesmerists already, applauded loudly.

Animal Magnetism was the subject next touched on, and the lecturer, with the assistance of the solitary committee-man, having

been blindfolded, retrieved things which had been hidden in various parts of the hall. This was simply an elaboration of the drawing-room game of inducing, by mere force of will, a blindfolded person to do certain simple acts, such as moving a vase, opening a book, etc., the operators keeping their hands on the subject's shoulders or waist. The professor called it "Thought-reading by means of Animal Magnetism."

The lecturer having gone out of the hall, the committee-man placed an india-rubber doll in the hands of one of the audience. He then went outside, blindfolded the "thought-reader," and led him in amid a buzz of expectation. Having placed the hand of the committee-man against his forehead, the professor said :

"Think intently of the place where the doll is hidden."

The committee-man cast down his eyes as

if in deep thought, and the professor started off in the right direction, *apparently* dragging his obliging assistant after him. On approaching the row of seats near where the doll was hidden, he stopped confusedly.

"You are no longer thinking of the doll," he said.

The committee-man confessed he was not.

"Then I beg you will do so," and in a few seconds the lecturer found himself at the right row, pushed his way in, and stopped before the very person who held the toy. All this time, be it noted, he kept the hand of his assistant against his forehead, with a view, it is supposed, of reading his thoughts. Whether there were any signs between the confederates or not, is not to be even darkly hinted at, suffice it to say that in this and several other somewhat similar experiments, such as finding a hidden pin, and reading the number of a banknote concealed in

his confederate's pocket, the professor succeeded, to the great delight of the audience.

“Now this,” said the “thought-reader,” “I cannot teach you how to do, as I could Mesmerism. All I can say is, that some people are more sensitive than others, and that I am one of the more sensitive. Copy me in what I have done as far as you are able, and if you happen to be naturally highly sensitive, you will succeed; if not, you will fail, and nothing can help you.”

These examples of Animal Magnetism, with an appropriate running dialogue, filled up the time until the return of Johnny Jordan bearing in his hand the shilling's-worth of mixed sweets. The professor was mildly jocular. Patting him on the head, he said :

“Good lad, good lad; sit down now on the platform until the others come in.”

Jordan, taking him at his word, squatted,

Eastern fashion, on the bare boards; but in every movement and act doing just as any one would who was in a trance. Within a very few minutes the others straggled in; Huskins with a gaily coloured mop over his shoulder, the others with the tripe, chignon, and bassinette respectively. This latter tickled the audience immensely, and, being in excellent temper, the professor's offer of the cradle to any young married man who might be present, was greeted with screams of laughter. It, however, met with no response, nor did any one come forward to take the chignon or the mop. But tripe proved more seductive, a burly countryman in the gallery calling out :

“I'd loike that, Mister; I'll be doon in a minute.”

“No, no, give it to me!” cried a dingy little man from the back of the hall.

The two claimants for the tripe quickly came

before the lecturer, each asserting that he had spoken first. With great gravity the professor directed them to hold the meat, and with a pocket knife he severed it into two equal pieces. This satisfied both parties, the countryman in particular being highly delighted. Nodding to the donor of the luscious morsel in the most familiar manner, he said :

“ I loike thee, and I loike thy lector, and, damn me, but I loike thy troipe.”

This little affair being settled, the next thing to be done was to unmesmerise the committee ; before he did so the professor said—

“ These gentlemen have been so very tractable that I should much like to have their services again. So, whilst they are still in the trance, I will command them to come here to-morrow night. They will probably do so.

“ I found out once, by accident, that orders to do certain acts some time within the next

twenty-four hours, given by me to subjects whom I had mesmerised, were usually—say three out of four times—obeyed. I will try the experiment with my present committee, and we shall see the result to-morrow.”

Then turning to his confederates—

“Gentlemen, I order you to attend here to-morrow evening at 7.30 p.m., punctually by the clock of Great St. Mary’s church ; and on no account fail. Mr. Smallwood, kindly assist me to take them out of their trance. Any one who aspires to be a mesmerist should note carefully the means taken to revive the subjects. The necessaries are a pair of bellows to blow in their faces, feathers to burn under their nostrils, and cold water to sprinkle over them ; in fact, they should be treated as you would any lady in a faint.”

Here a voice cried out—

“ What ! loosen their—— ? ”

What might have been said is left unrecorded, owing to a general explosion of laughter which drowned the last word. Anyhow, what was intended seemed generally understood before the completion of the sentence. Possibly it was a reference to an event of purely local interest of which we have no knowledge. All that we can do is to give a faithful record of what happened, and express our regret at being unable to explain anything which may seem obscure.

“This is no subject for joking,” said the professor; “it would be a serious thing to entrance any one, and be unable to bring them round.”

After some labour with the bellows, feathers, and cold water, on the part of the mesmerist and his manager, the committee were brought round. On awaking they one and all declared they had no knowledge of anything that had

happened to them, or even that they had left the hall.

It being now rather past the advertised hour for closing the entertainment, the professor wound up, "God Save the Queen" was played as before, and the company dispersed.

Jordan and some of his friends mixed with the departing crowd, and, from chance remarks they heard, gathered that a great many people had enjoyed themselves immensely, and that an interest in Mesmerism had been set up in the minds of many an undergraduate and worthy burgher of Cambridge.





CHAPTER IX.

TREATING OF A CERTAIN TEA-PARTY AT WHICH
THE PROFESSOR'S WONDERFUL POWER IS FELT.

THE following day considerable interest was excited in certain University circles as to whether Professor Danesfield Saxelby's powers extended so far as he had asserted. Very few believed that the committee would feel forced to attend the third evening's entertainment, and there was not a little betting going on about it.

In St. John's College was a certain man named Ripley, who, having strong religious feelings, looked with almost horror on the mesmeric performances of our friend.

“If,” thought he, “those poor fellows are drawn irresistibly to the entertainment, there must be something diabolical in that man’s powers. I will try and circumvent him.”

Laying his head alongside that of another Johnian—also of devout and pious tendencies—the two arranged that Ripley should invite Jordan and the others, with whom they were acquainted, to tea that evening. The clock was to be put back twenty minutes with a view of making them late for the entertainment.

Unfortunately for this little plot, Ripley confided it to a sieve in the shape of his gyp, who, going home about midday, let it through to his wife. She, meeting the wife of the head waiter of the “Hoop,” told her the tale with a few embellishments. The waiter’s wife, in her turn, confided in her lord, who, expectant of good remuneration, laid the plot before the manager. Mr. Smallwood chuckled a

mephistophelian chuckle and gave the man five shillings.

“It’s worth ever so much to us,” he thought. “I’ll send a line to Johnny on the subject.”

Jordan duly received a polite invitation to tea, and was about refusing it, not caring for the host, when a note was brought to him from the “Hoop.” After reading it, he wrote to Ripley saying he would be pleased to tea with him that evening, called on Huskins and the rest, and bade them do likewise.

The tea-party at Ripley’s was not a lively affair. To begin with, it was rather a poor substitute for dinner, being of a cold nature, and *buttery-tea*¹ taking the place of wine. A pair of rather dry cold chickens and a plateful of slices of cut ham were the principal dishes ; a scanty supply of buttered toast and two small plates of sweets made up the not-too-luxurious

¹ Tea provided by the college butler from the butteries.

repast. Johnny on arriving, without being observed, had taken a glance at his watch—previously set by Great St. Mary's—and noticed that Ripley's clock was nearly half an hour slow. Taking advantage of his host's disappearance in search of his gyp (these gentry hate cold meat teas), he told Erskine and the rest about the clock.

"Don't say anything about it," he said, "but notice what I say, and say the same. Back me up in everything I do."

Ripley entered at that moment, and tea commenced. The host seemed anxious and ill at ease; he ate next to nothing, and kept turning fidgety glances towards the clock.

Suddenly turning to Jordan he asked:

"Have you any idea of going to hear Professor Danesfield Saxelby this evening?"

"No," replied Jordan; "have you?"

"Have I? I would not go for worlds!"

“Why not?”

“I think the entertainment is a wicked one. It seems bordering on those mysteries into which it is wrong to inquire.”

“Whatever mysteries do you mean?”

“Well, I can hardly tell you, but it is an unchristian exhibition,” and, offering Huskins some more chicken, Ripley managed to change the subject, being perfectly unable to state the causes of his dislike, not really knowing them himself.

When it was about six by the clock, Jordan said, carelessly:

“I feel half inclined to go to the Guildhall to-night, after all. Will any of you fellows come with me?”

“But you said you wouldn’t go!” gasped out Ripley, who fancied he saw the mesmerist’s diabolical spell working. “Here, have some more chicken.”

“No thanks. What do you say to going, Huskins?”

“I was half thinking of it when you spoke,” replied Huskins.

“And so was I—and so was I,” came from the other confederates.

Ripley leaned back in his chair, and turned pale. His fears were being fulfilled.

“But you have plenty of time as yet,” he said, in an agitated voice; “the performance does not commence until 7.30.”

“Yes, we have plenty of time *as yet*,” replied Jordan, with an air of mystery, and laying the slightest possible stress on the two last words.

For a few minutes there was an awkward silence which Huskins broke by giving his host a description of the first evening’s entertainment. Things went on quietly enough until a quarter to seven by the clock, which, be it always remembered, was a half-hour slow. At that

time, to Ripley's dismay, Jordan, having shot a knowing look at Huskins and Erskine, got up suddenly and said :

“ I must go now.”

“ Where to ? ” asked his host, nervously.

“ To the entertainment of course.”

“ But you have still three-quarters of an hour. I can't let you off just yet,” said Ripley, with a faint attempt at jocularitv.

“ Yes, I know ; but I really must go now. I can't help it. I'll stay longer another time.”

Erskine, Huskins, and the other confederates, also expressed their determination to go with Jordan. They were very sorry—knew it was awfully rude, but really could not help it.

Ripley felt desperate. Putting his back against the door—

“ Now you shall not go for another half-hour, at least,” he said, firmly.

Jordan, seeing that no time was to be lost

if they were to be at the Guildhall at half-past seven, signalled to Huskins. That worthy responded, and, taking each an arm of their host, moved him to one side, and bolted down the staircase, the rest quickly following. Ripley's hair almost stood on end. He was a simple-minded man ; rather apt, perhaps, to obtrude his religious views, but perfectly harmless. In what had happened, he honestly believed he had seen the cloven hoof. Adams came up to his rooms shortly after this to see how their little plan had worked, only to find the birds flown.

“ I put back the clock,” said Ripley, “ and I am certain none of them looked at their watches. Though half an hour before they had positively said they would not go to the Guildhall to-night, yet, at the right time—when it appeared to want three-quarters of an hour to it by my clock—they all got up, and nothing, not even force, could make them stay.”

The poor fellow was almost in tears at having been so easily overcome in his Quixotic battle against the Evil One.

“I shall mention this at our next prayer meeting,” he continued; “it must be made a special subject of consideration.”

To this Adams sadly assented, and the friends shortly after separated.

In the Guildhall all was fun and merriment. The professor had again mesmerised his committee, and was extracting from them the quaint details of what had passed at Ripley's party. The house was crammed to even a greater extent than on the first evening. The curiosity to see if the committee would obey the mesmerist's commands had been very great; and many people who had been there the night before, came again. Altogether the three entertainments, from a financial, and, in fact, every point of view, had been a brilliant success.

The professor followed on much the lines of the preceding evening, winding up with the "GREAT DISCLOSURE of the DARK SEANCE SPIRITUALISTIC CABINET IMPOSTURE ; given by SPECIAL REQUEST," as it was stated in the programmes.

A woful calamity nearly occurred during this dark *seance*. There being some little hitch with the ghost, the professor, getting anxious, stopped his noise with the whistle to listen. The hall-keeper, taking the silence for a sign for the gas, turned on the light, and the audience beheld Johnny and the others on their knees, striving to fix together the mask, whalebone, and muslin, which made up the spirit. The cabinet was of course closed. Jordan's heart almost stopped, and he nearly lost his presence of mind, but the manager was equal to this or any other emergency.

" Say you are examining the spirit which fell

out of the cabinet," he whispered from the side ; and Johnny, in rather a shamefaced way, addressed the audience to that effect.

"Open the curtains," said the professor. Jordan did so, and the lecturer was beheld tied as before.

"I regret that the spirit has not manifested itself in a proper manner to-night," he continued; "but if the committee will return it to me here, I will guarantee its proper appearance when the gas is lowered."

The component parts of the spirit were put in the cabinet, the gas was lowered, and, after a few seconds, the ghost appeared as on the first night. The audience little guessed how near they were discovering the fraud. The rest of the entertainment passed off splendidly.



CHAPTER X.

WHICH SHOWS THE RESULTS OF THE LECTURES
—FINANCIAL AND OTHERWISE,—AND THE DIS-
TRIBUTION OF REWARDS AND DESERTS.

PROFESSOR DANESFIELD SAXELBY had wished to give a great supper that night in the rooms of one Rivingston, usually residing in Trinity College, but now in London visiting a dear relative. The manager, however, advised against this.

“Don't run any risk, old boy,” he said, “it's been a splendid lark, we must not spoil it. No, you and I will trot off quietly to-morrow morning by the first train. Possibly a fellow you know, called Buller, may meet another

fellow called Rivingston, and the two can come up together in the most natural way, by an afternoon train. Do you comprehend?"

"Be it so," said the professor—and so it was.

Rivingston and Buller stepped from a train at Cambridge station the next afternoon, and walked quickly down Station Road. Going at rather a brisk pace, they caught up, and would have passed, a certain great man; but he, possibly wishing for society by the way, and knowing Rivingston, stopped them. The great man—no other than our old acquaintance the "Head," who was lunching with the Vice; the tall and thin one—was unusually affable for an ex-Vice-Chancellor, Don, Doctor of Divinity, and Master of a College, all combined in one person. Quoth Rivingston:

"Who, sir, is this Professor Danesfield Saxelby, whose name seems placarded everywhere?"

“A most estimable man,” was the prompt reply. “You have lost much by not having attended his lectures. By his aid, we have rooted up, and utterly demolished, a most dangerous craze which was growing up in this place.”

“Indeed! may I ask what craze you speak of?” asked Buller, in a tone of the deepest interest.

“Spiritualism, table-turning, and all that folly,” replied the great man.

“He must be a remarkably able man,” observed Rivingston, “and I much regret I missed seeing him. Is it certain his lecture has borne such good fruit as you say?”

The Don, ex-Vice, and Doctor of Divinity rolled into one, looked a little astonished at a simple undergraduate not taking for granted what he had said.

“Yes, sir, it is quite certain,” he replied,

rather severely. "Out of forty misguided youths who professed a belief in Spiritualism, and who were sent by the Vice-Chancellor to the lecture, thirty-five came to him the next morning to thank him for having sent them, and anxious to repay the cost of their seats."

"And the five others?" asked Buller.

"All but one came to him yesterday with the same tale."

"And that one," inquired Rivingston, anxiously, "was he not converted too?"

"No, but he probably is by this time," said the don, with a chuckle. "We sent him down this morning. Good-day, gentlemen," and the great man turned to the right, through the iron gates of Emmanuel College.

Our friends pursued their way down St. Andrew's Street, through the ancient and quaint Petty Cury, across the old Market Place, under the shadow of Great St. Mary's Church, and so

on to Trinity College. At the Porter's Lodge they stopped for a moment to ask for any letters which might have come for Rivingston, then, entering the large court and turning to the right, they soon found themselves in Jordan's rooms, where a substantial luncheon was awaiting them. Winter railway travelling in frosty weather is not a bad thing for the appetite, and for some time there was very little conversation, every attention being paid to their plates, or rather the contents of them. After luncheon Rivingston said :

"I am going to have a big spread in my rooms to-night, Johnny. Of course you'll come. It's Buller's last night up here, and Erskine and the rest will be there."

"Yes, of course I will," answered Johnny, "I'll be delighted. But where will you put them all? Besides, your table is only fit to play whist on."

"Oh, I'll manage, never fear!"

"But I don't think you can manage. Why not have my rooms and give the supper in them."

"Yes, that's the best way," added Buller; and so it was arranged, much to the delight of Mr. Flack, the gyp.

"Oh, it's grand!" he whispered to his wife, as he passed her that afternoon on his way to the kitchens, with a slip of paper in his hand.

"Let's see what 'e's ordered," said his spouse, taking the paper. "'Dinner for eight, at seven o'clock. Oysters, turkey, cutlets, stewed kidneys, partridges, maraschino jelly, tipsy cake, ices'—and, that's all. Ah, that's what I call a dinner; but order it for *ten*—them cooks never send enough—and no one will know the difference."

"I will," said the gyp, and taking a pencil from his pocket he altered the eight into a ten,

little thinking, as he did so, of the fearful retribution which was to come upon him that evening.

“Bring your two big baskets,” he added; “there may be a bottle or two of wine,” and the worthy man sped on his way to the college kitchens.

Shortly before seven o'clock, the professor's committee, with Rivingston and Buller, assembled in Jordan's rooms. Punctually at seven the dinner was served, and done full justice to by eight healthy young appetites. Dessert being placed on the table, Rivingston indicated that he had a little speech to make. The gyp having been got rid of with a note about nothing in particular to a man living the other side of the college, the ex-professor commenced:

“You all know,” he said, “that this affair, which has just been so successfully carried

through, was undertaken with two objects : first, to bamboozle the dons, in which we thoroughly succeeded ; and secondly, to raise enough money to get our friend here out of difficulties. We have more than succeeded in this second object. Johnny, old fellow, take that"—giving him a bulky roll of notes—"and bless the professor and his manager to the end of your existence."

Some one who was there declares to this day that Johnny's eyes were moist as he took the packet. Anyhow, he had no words of thanks. Maybe his heart was a trifle too full for him to speak.

"There now remains," continued Rivingston, "a surplus, which I want to know what to do with. Can any of you make a few suggestions about it?"

"I think," said Huskins, "whatever else we may do with this surplus, we ought to devote

a part of it as a testimonial to our energetic manager who——”

“Shut up!” interrupted Buller, with a good deal of animation; “I won’t have anything of the kind. I came here as a friend, and for the fun of the thing, and have greatly enjoyed it. No, give the rest of the money to a charity, or something of that kind.”

“How much is there left?” asked Erskine of Rivingston, who had sat down during this little controversy.

“Sixty pounds,” was the reply.

“I think,” said Johnny, “if you will agree to it, Rivingston and I will be able to get rid of the money——”

“No doubt you will—you’re just the fellows to do that,” and such like sayings came from the company.

“You won’t let a man finish. I was going to add, when you stopped me, that we would

dispose of the money in a way I feel certain you will approve of ;” and Jordan whispered a few words in Rivingston’s ear.

“ Yes, that’s the best way,” said the other, aloud. “ I don’t think you fellows can do better than as Johnny suggests. We can think it well over, and before we fix on anything we’ll let you know about it.”

This they all agreed to, with the following result. Buller, about six weeks later, was one day sitting in his rooms in Adelphi Terrace, getting up a new part. A knock came at the door, and his landlord entered bearing a heavy box.

“ I don’t expect anything,” said the actor, examining it ; “ but it’s clearly addressed to me.”

A hammer and chisel soon brought to light a mass of white tissue paper, inside which were two lengthy jeweller’s cases, and, on these being opened, there appeared two splendid silver candlesticks.

“Oh, this is some swindle!” cried Buller; “they will say I ordered them, and try and make me keep them. I don’t see any bill or address.”

“I think there’s something engraved, some writing or other,” said the landlord, who had been looking at them closely.

“So there is,” said Buller; and taking up one he read——

“ ‘*From*
PROFESSOR DANESFIELD SAXELBY
and some other
grateful and admiring friends.’ ”

Then followed the date, and that was all.

“They never gave me a degree, but I got this pair of silver candlesticks, and I learnt to act. It’s more than a good many fellows get,” mused the actor, looking at his present.

But *revenons à nos moutons*. Rivingston’s dinner-party was a merry one. Said Erskine:

“ By gad, Jordan, we have quite forgotten the little scheme we arranged to test that old beer-barrel gyp of yours. Could we not manage it to-night before Buller leaves for town ? ”

“ Yes, ” added Rivingston ; “ it will be a little study for him. He will be fit to play in the *Le Malade Imaginaire* after it. ”

“ I don't think you can trick the old boy as easily as you imagine, ” replied Jordan ; “ but we can do it as well to-night as any other time. You fellows will all have to leave my rooms for a few minutes ; we can say we are going out for some cigars. Take some more sherry, Erskine ; I want that decanter emptied. ”

Erskine had his glass filled, and there yet remaining half a glass in the decanter, Johnny poured it out and drank it himself. Calling Flack, he said to that worthy :

“ We are going out for some cigars. Get

some coffee from the butteries whilst we are out, and put another bottle of sherry in the decanter. I seem to have mislaid my keys," he continued, having felt in all his pockets; "but never mind, there is another decanter of wine in the cupboard, put that out."

"Yes, sir," assented the gyp.

Johnny and his friends catching up caps and gowns, trotted down the stone staircase and into the quad below, leaving the gyp and his wife to themselves. The little party went no further than outside the college gates, where Jordan called a halt.

"I know exactly how much wine is in the decanter I told him to put out, and if I find any gone, I have a plan of half frightening the old rascal out of his wits about it, only"—turning to Rivingston—"you must let me be host for the rest of the evening, and you fellows must help me carry it through." Of course

they agreed to do so. "Now let us get back without loss of time," Johnny continued; "or he will have done all I told him, and have gone home."

In a few minutes they were, rather to the gyp's surprise, again in Jordan's rooms. Flack had, however, been able to fetch the coffee from the butteries, and put out the other decanter of wine. He was then engaged in some mysterious occupation with Mrs. Flack, in the gyp-room.¹ Johnny, on entering, left the door slightly ajar, so that any conversation going on in the keeping-room might be distinctly audible to Flack. He immediately noticed that one, if not two, glasses of wine had disappeared out of the decanter.

"Just as I expected," he whispered to Rivingston, "but I shall make the rascal repent this, and pay him out for many misdeeds of the

¹ Pantry.

kind. "Is that Mrs. Flack going downstairs? Look out of the window as she passes under it, to make certain."

"Yes, it's Mrs. Flack," said Rivington, looking out into the court, "and from the appearance of her cloak, I should say she had two tolerably large baskets underneath it."

This little conversation had all been conducted in a whisper.

"Come, you fellows," said Jordan aloud, "draw your chairs up to the fire. What will you drink, Buller? Try this sherry before you taste your coffee."

"Thanks, I will," replied Buller.

Jordan taking up the robbed decanter began to pour out some wine into Buller's glass. Suddenly he let it fall with a great crash, and cried out in a fearful tone:

"Good God! I was nearly poisoning you!"

On hearing this, they all sprang to their feet with various exclamations of astonishment.

“There was strychnine in that wine and I nearly forgot it,” he added, excitedly. In the chimney-glass he could see Flack’s face, hideously pale, peeping in at the door.

“My dear fellow, you must be mistaken,” said Rivingston; “how could strychnine get into the decanter?”

“I put it there.”

“You! but what on earth for?”

“A very simple reason. My doctor said I wanted a nerve tonic, and ordered me strychnine. It being such a powerful poison it has to be very highly diluted. He told me to put a certain quantity in a decanter of sherry, and take tablespoonful doses, with a little water added. Any one drinking a wine-glassful of that wine would die within half an hour. I

can never forgive myself my carelessness in so nearly forgetting about it."

All this time Jordan could watch in the chimney-glass the face of the gyp, and could note the effect of his words. At first Flack had suspected a hoax, but such a plausible explanation, combined with the dropping of the decanter, "which," thought the gyp, "no man would break if he were not in real earnest," fully persuaded him that there actually had been poison in the wine, of which he had taken a couple of glasses. Oddly enough he, at that moment, began to feel pangs in his interior—owing probably to certain mouthfuls of a mixed character which he had cribbed from various dishes during the dinner—but which, in his excited imagination, he fully believed to be the first workings of the poison. His love of life was greater than his fear of disgrace. Unable to contain himself, he burst into the room, slid

into an easy chair, and, clasping his abdomen with his hands, shrieked out :

“ Go for the doctor ! For mercy’s sake fetch the doctor ! I’m poisoned. I took some of the sherry. Oh, oh ! I feel so bad. I only took the wine because I wasn’t well and thought it might do me good. Oh, fetch the doctor ! I’m dying ! ”

“ The old boy’s unusually talkative to-night, ” whispered Rivingston in Johnny’s ear. “ What are we to do with him next ? Shall we try an emetic ? ”

“ A capital idea ; but I must get a confession out of him first, ” and then, turning to Flack—

“ Your death will be due to your own criminal actions. There is no time to fetch a doctor. (Flack groaned.) You would be dead long before he arrived. Your only chance is in something I can give you, and even that is uncertain. ”

“Then give it to me, give it me good, kind young gentleman. Oh! the pain’s awful. I feel I’m going. For God’s sake fetch my wife!”

Jordan kept the gravest face he could, and thus addressed the dying gyp :

“I feel certain, Flack, that wine is not the only thing you have stolen from me. Make a full confession of everything, or I will not make an effort to save you.”

At first the wretched man denied everything, only crying out for an antidote ; but, finding his master inexorable, he by degrees admitted a number of small delinquencies, such as thefts of candles, books, lamp oil, coal, soap, tobacco, photographic scraps, and groceries innumerable.

When everything relating to his misdeeds had been got out of the poor wretch, and he had solemnly sworn to take the pledge—there was some difficulty in getting him to do this—

a short lecture was administered by Jordan. Meanwhile, the mustard pot had been emptied into a soda water tumbler, which was filled with hot water from the kettle. The contents, having been well stirred, were eagerly swallowed—such is the fear of death. But for the second time in this history we must draw a veil. Suffice it to say, the emetic relieving the indigestion from which the gyp was suffering, he believed himself rid of the poison. Thanking Johnny—though not so graciously as he might have done—he was taken home in a cab half an hour later, under charge of the college porter.

“I had not the remotest idea the fellow had been robbing me to such an extent,” said Jordan, when they were chatting over the affair afterwards.

“No, I daresay not,” replied Buller. “Before I went down, I remember there was a man in John’s who made himself particularly disagree- 5

able to college servants. He used to say that if a systematic examination of the bedmakers' baskets were made every morning and evening, the majority of undergraduates would be saved from twenty to thirty pounds a year."

"I can quite believe it," chimed in Erksine; "probably none of you fellows ever heard the college servants' proverb."

"No; out with it, old boy," said Rivingston.

"Simply that 'One foot in college is worth an acre of land.' I suppose you see the *double entendre*."

The party broke up at a very late hour. Rivingston was the last to go.

"I suppose you will say I am a queer fellow to give advice," he said; "but I know, Johnny, you won't mind my saying that I hope, now you have got out of your trouble with the book-maker, you will stick to work a bit; and try to take a decent degree. You see, if you

please that ferocious old uncle of yours, everything will go so smoothly with you."

"Well, I dare say I shall be able to manage it yet," answered Jordan, "and I would do a good deal more than that, if I could, to please you, after what you have done for me lately."

"Well, good-night, old fellow. Don't be surprised if you see me 'buckle to' a bit. I want a little variety, and will see what work is like for a change.'

Undergraduates usually only shake hands twice during the term, namely, at *coming up* and *going down*; but on this occasion the two friends gave each other a warm clasp of the hand ere they parted.

And so ends the true and faithful account of the celebrated lectures on Spiritualism, Mesmerism, and Thought-reading. It need not be said that Rivingston's pranks did not end with

this one, and possibly some others may be related at a future time. By turning to the University Record for the year 18—, it will be noted with satisfaction by many readers that Jordan took an excellent degree, with second class honours in classics, Rivington contenting himself with an ordinary poll degree, taken in the same year.

FINIS.

